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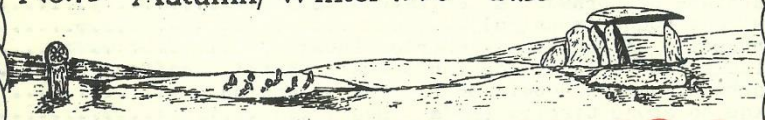
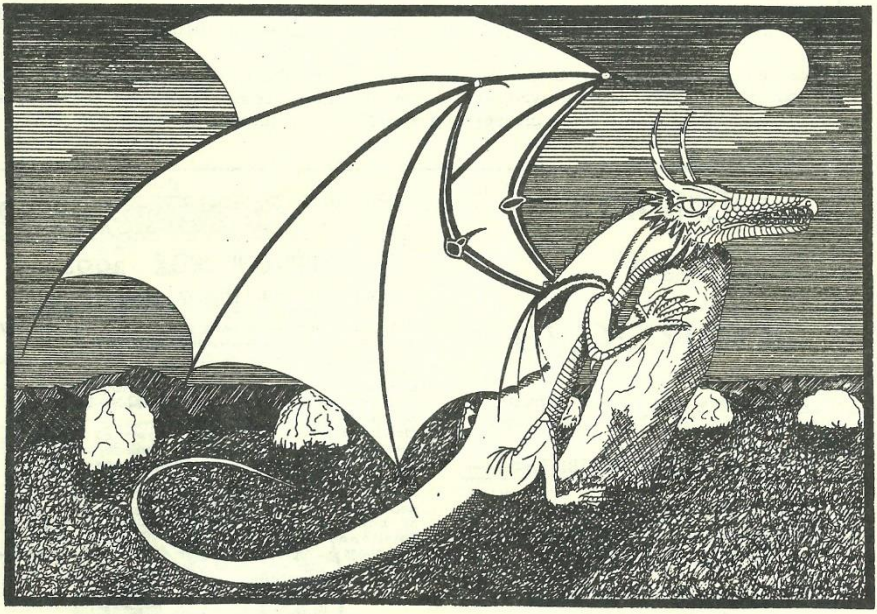


meyn mamvro

ancient stones and sacred sites in cornwall



DRAGONS, GIANTS, & RITUALS •

TINTAGEL'S SACRED SITE - Charles Thomas

STONE CIRCLES • HERITAGE SITES •

CONTENTS

Editorial ..... p 1
Guardians of Cornwall's heritage - CS ..... p 2
Lost and Found (menhirs) ..... p 3
Tintagel's sacred site - Charles Thomas ..... p 4
Rituals and rites at Cornish sites - Cheryl Straffon ..... p 6
Quartz stones on Bodmin Moor - Chris Jenkins p10
Guide to Stone Circles (Bodmin Moor) p11
The Dragon: myth or mystery? - Su Bayfield p15
Cornish giants in the landscape - Tony Roberts p18
Book review p22
Noticeboard p23
The Pipers Tune p24

Our grateful thanks to Barry Millard who has taken over the cover design from Su Bayfield who produced the previous 6 beautiful cover drawings, and to Glen Leon for the drawing on p16. All articles copyright Meyn Mamvro or the authors and may not be reproduced without permission. Contributions are welcome and should be sent to Cheryl Straffon, 51 Carn Bosavern, St Just, Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7QX.

A free index to Meyn Mamvro nos 1 - 12 was sent to regular subscribers with the last edition. If you have not received one or buy MM direct from one of our dozen retail outlets and would like a copy please send a SAE to the above address.

VISIONS AND JOURNEYS

35 Fore Street, St. Just-in-Penwith
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AUTUMN/WINTER 1990 EXHIBITIONS -

25th September - 27th October
KURT JACKSON - Granitescapes
Paintings of Penwith

29th October - 23rd November
Selected Group Exhibition

26th November - 24th December
Christmas Exhibition
(pictures, crafts, handmade cards)

Opening hours: Monday to Saturday
10 - 12, 2 - 6pm. Thursday 10 - 12
[Closed 25 December - Spring 1991]

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CELTIC CALENDAR & almanack

the calendar is circular. Based upon the celtic/druidic tree/bird alphabet. It is woven with the seasons, phases of the moon, celtic months, astrological signs, ruling aspects, gods/goddesses and major festivals: the almanack is full of information. Dates and illustrations, celtic and otherwise:
the calendar and almanac costs £5.00 inc. p.p. and will be available august/september:
also a series of cards and posters pagan/goddess/god related.
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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

The lovely Spring and Summer weather this year was ideal for some Meyn Mamvro/Cornish Earth Mysteries Group outside events. On Sunday April 29th the EM Group held a dowsing day at Heather Farm, Pendeen with Don Wilkins, Cornwall's foremost water dowser. About 30 people watched an interesting demonstration and practised dowsing themselves. Up at Chûn Quoit an energy line was found running from the Castle through the Quoit and on to Carn Kenidjack, a line that also "coincidentally" marks the midwinter sunset alignment in a notch on the Carn. One member found a spiral energy pattern inside the Quoit itself – a similar pattern has also been found at other standing stones. It is as if the energy runs across the land in straight lines from one site to another, spirals around the site, and then continues straight on, perhaps linking in with significant solar alignments. More research here is obviously needed.

May Day Eve brought the 2nd year Maypole Dance up on Carn Bosavern in St. Just, this time with local live musicians who played about 1½ hours for over 30 adults and children who came to celebrate summer's beginning with a dance around the pole. Despite the cold wind, the skies were clear and the sun set into the sea off Lands End as the dancing came to a close. A truly memorable occasion, and one that some people continued the next morning at dawn when a beautiful sunrise brought a classic Beltane morn alive, followed by a trip to Padstow for Obby Oss day

A week later Meyn Mamvro again organised the Three Wells Walk (see MM11p10) when a group of 18 or so made their way by inland paths to the sacred wells at Sancreed, Carn Euny and Madron. Water was collected from each well in turn and finally placed in Madron Well itself in a simple but moving ceremony. An immensely peaceful day that will stay in the mind for a long time.

The Summer Solstice saw some pagan friends from the USA coming to join in the celebrations. And in July the EM Group organised a Ley Walk, following some of the half dozen or so leys around the Merry Maidens area (see MM6p4-7 & MM7p3). Over 35 people turned up for this, and some interesting discoveries were made; for example that the Boscawen-Ros hedge stone is in its original position, and that the holed stone at Boleigh Farm (4365 2489) is still in place (see MM7p3). Also a recent geiger radiation reading anomoly along the road from the Maidens was confirmed by dowsing to be the site of a lost burial chamber (4292 2435), and the same spiral energy pattern already mentioned at Chûn Quoit was also found at Tregiffian Barrow. A very productive and fruitful day.

Finally, the August Full Moon brought Meyn Mamvro's Tinners Way walk – 10 miles across the Penwith Moors by sunset and full moonrise. Both were seen in perfect balance from the top of Chûn Castle, where the sun set in a red ball into the sea one side, and the full moon rose all pink and huge over Mounts Bay and the Lizard point on the other. A breathtaking finalé to a glorious and lively Summer.

All are welcome to such local group events - further details on page 23.

COMMENT

GUARDIANS OF CORNWALL'S HERITAGE

The letter from Nick Johnson (County Archaeologist) in the previous MM has provoked some lively reaction. Reader John E. Palmer felt strongly that although the Unit has no statutory control over ancient monuments it ought to feel responsible for them - "surely the archaeological bodies combined can lay considerable weight into the scales to achieve total legal protection of ALL megalithic sacred sites?" Other people have made the point that the Field Monument Warden who is responsible for monitoring the condition of over 1000 scheduled sites in Cornwall is employed for only half a day a week! Clearly the commitment of English Heritage towards the sites leaves something to be desired. Furthermore the Warden appears to possess few if any real powers: she can only try to persuade landowners, on whose property sites stand, to co-operate. This she undoubtedly does very ably, but the fact remains that the public have have no legal right of access to any ancient site, unless it is owned by EH themselves (only a handful are) or unless there is a public right of way actually to the site (very few are in that position). The unsatisfactory nature of this state of affairs has been highlighted only recently when a landowner, Brian Lawry, on whose property the beautifully unspoilt Bosullow Trehyllis courtyard house settlement stands, fenced the site in to prevent open public access.

Even on the sites that it owns, English Heritage seems to betray an extraordinary insensitivity or indifference to the state of the site. At Chysauster courtyard house settlement they planned to bury the fogou in order to save the cost of repairing it, until vehement protest by Peter Pool and Craig Weatherhill forced them to think again. Even now, they have had to launch a £100,000 appeal to save the site, which seems a grossly inflated sum. Craig has made the point that they are already a statutory body funded by taxpayers money, and that money could be made available if they spent a little less on their pet projects like Stonehenge. And then again at Carn Euny fogou they have now (as MM10 revealed) placed an ugly iron grid on top of the beehive hut, shortly to be replaced by a "fine mesh with reinforcing grid". If the hut had to be roofed, why could it not have been done in similar material to the original? Can we really afford to leave our precious heritage in the hands of a body such as this?

Finally, they also seem to have upset the Isles of Scilly Environmental Trust who are sharply critical of their lack of assistance in maintaining the important Bronze Age village settlement on the off-island of Nor Nour. The Trust's director Peter Murrish said that, despite earlier promises to the contrary, English Heritage appeared to be disinclined to give any financial assistance for work done in protecting the settlement from the sea or in giving any kind of guarantee for the future.

All this does place in some doubt Nick Johnson's comment (MM12) that "English Heritage can help with grants". Yes they can, but will they? Or is Cornwall too remote from their sphere of operations to warrant much consideration? Perhaps what we need here is not English Heritage but some proper resources and finance for our unique Cornish heritage instead. (CS)

Lost and Found

A menhir has been newly discovered during the survey of Kit Hill by the CAU last year. At sx3728 7203 it lies on the NW side of the hill below the Quarry dumps. It is made of granite with a high proportion of quartz, and is nearly 7ft high with a base 5ft long and 3½ft wide. Ann Eade, local historian, has commented: "It gives a feeling of massive strength, despite the fact that the granite is badly flawed. This probably saved it from the moorstone workers, as it shows no sign of being quarried." There are other Bronze Age burial sites on the hill but this is the first standing stone to have been discovered this far east in Cornwall, only 5 miles or so from the English border. Two possible ley lines run from the stone through (1) a tumulus on the hill at SX3750 7070 to a tumulus on Viverdon Down at SX3810 6745, and (2) another tumulus on the hill at 3737 7067 and on to Dupath Well. In addition John Barrett has dowsed the area and has found a number of energy lines crossing the hill and running through some Bronze Age barrows and enclosures. (See "Kit Hill - Our Hill" booklet by Ann Eade).

Moving further west to Bodmin Moor, another menhir has been found here in addition to the ones listed in MM8p15. It stands near Tregune farm in a rough field on the north edge of the Moor at SX2260 7950 [Photograph left] It is some 7ft high, and is close to other sites, being less than a mile due east from Spettigue standing stone (2130 7952) and about a mile NW from the Nine Stones circle and the newly-discovered Fox Tor stone row.

Next, in the east of Penwith the Longstone at Carbis Bay (SW5303 3821) mentioned in the Guide to Standing Stones in MM8p11 as having only scant remains is in fact still standing and unbroken. It stands next to a bus stop, unnoticed by the residents and visitors of Carbis Bay on their daily business!

Finally, in West Penwith, the broken remains of the Carnello stone near to St Ives (SW5065 4016) have been found in the hedge of a field at the back of the Rugby Club behind the housing estate. But meanwhile in St Just the building of a new housing development at South Place has revealed that an old granite gatepost is in fact an up-ended Cornish cross. The stone is some 3½ feet high with an incised square about an inch and a half deep containing a rough cross. It may originally have been used to establish the boundary of Lafrowda before St. Just existed.

TINTAGEL'S SACRED SITE

by CHARLES THOMAS

Professor Charles Thomas is Director of the Institute of Cornish Studies, past-president of the Cornwall Archaeological Society, and Cornwall's leading professional archaeologist, renowned nationally and internationally for his work and knowledge of Cornwall's ancient sites. His recent excavations at Tintagel have attracted widespread interest, and he here presents the first preliminary account of the results, written exclusively for Meyn Mamvro.

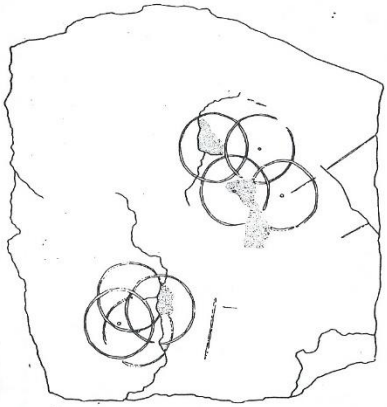
All the clues suggest that before the 12th century the remarkable natural stronghold of Tintagel Island was regarded, by the Cornish, as having been the citadel of great figures of their race, kings or heroes, in some remote past. It seems probable that the story-cycle involving King Mark, Tristan and Isolde - these are all originally Cornish names and are first recorded in pre-Norman Cornwall - was partly set at Tintagel

Considerable research, primarily from the Institute of Cornish Studies, has been devoted since 1980 to most of Tintagel's problems. Thousands of finds (excavated 1933-38, or discovered since) were catalogued and identified; all the historical sources re-examined; various new surveys commissioned from state agencies;and minor excavations carried out by Cornwall Archaeological Unit, the combined results of which have attracted wide national and international attention. The Island, and part of the mainland cut off by the great ditch, occupied slightly in the late Roman period, was then used sporadically until about AD 600 as some kind of seasonal citadel; almost all the top of the Island is covered with structures and the heart of this citadel is now known to lie under the Hall of the mediaeval Inner or Island Ward. The finds include large amounts of pottery containers (for wine, olive-oil or other commodities), fine dishes and glass from the Mediterranean - places like southern Turkey, Byzantium, the Greek Isles and North Africa are involved - and these are seen as luxuries, imported directly by ships tying up at Tintagel itself, traded for streamed tin and perhaps other items centrally collected by a process of tribute. The attributions of these distant imports, and their dates, are certain. The visible Castle appeared much later, after a period of long disuse during which only the Island chapel (11th century?) was built; this castle is the work of Richard Earl of Cornwall, was started in AD 1230-33, and was possibly completed in the next ten years.

The rulers, or grandees, or local kings behind this post-Roman occupation remain anonymous; we can't at this date talk about 'the ancient kings of Cornwall' because the native British kingdom, Dumnonia, also embraced Devon and part of Somerset and such rulers probably moved from centre to centre over one or more years. We can be fairly sure that by, AD 500, they were Christian and their court and retainers, and war-band, were also nominally Christian. The Island contains no known traces of a contemporary church or graveyard. In the last few years, compiling a detailed archaeological study of Tintagel parish churchyard and various discoveries there, I became convinced that this site - with its reported cist-graves, partial exterior earthwork and curious grassy mounds - might also go back to the 5th and 6th centuries AD, and represent the 'sacred site' attached to the purely military-political occupation of the Island citadel.

The prediction, the 'model' or hypothetical sequence, for Tintagel churcyard was published in Cornish Studies vol.16 for 1988 (Feb.1989). It argued that an extensive Christian cemetary of cist-graves, serving a wide area, came into use about AD 500. Slightly later, part of this area was enclosed into an oval shape with a bank and ditch (like the many ancient Cornish churchyards or 'lans'), and within the enclosure were placed various 'special graves', the larger distinctive graves of 'special' people, over which the visible mounds had accumulated. The sanctity of the place still held good in the 1130s, when the Anglo-Normans built the first parish church of St. Materiana (using some relic from her shrine at nearby Minster, her earlier focus); their walled graveyard was laid out partly on and partly within the much older earthwork enclosure. This explains why the parish church is a half-mile from Tintagel (Trevena) village, which grew up only later in the 1230s, on each side of the trackway leading to Earl Richard's new Castle.

The opportunity to test all this came unexpectedly when Mobil North Sea Limited offered to fund excavations; permission, and enthusiastic support, came from the church and people of Tintagel, and the project (a partnership between the Institute and Cornwall Archaeological Unit) was directed in the field by Jacky Nowakowski of CAU. Results (March-April) 1990 were exciting, to say the least. We re-opened one mound ('C') into which a ragged trench had been dug in 1942; on the post-Roman land surface, now 6ft down, typical long-cist graves of slate were found, between two extraordinary burials that can be called 'mound graves' - linear mounds of slate and soil, piled (presumably) above roofed long cists. Accumulation of soil, and in recent centuries some dumping, had perpetuated their shape up to the presently-visible churchyard mounds.



The area opened also produced, for the first time in the south-west, 'primary cross-slabs'; small slabs of slate with incised crosses, or crosses of arcs compass-drawn, placed in or above cist-graves, known from Ireland, Wales and points north in the later 6th and 7th centuries. Between the graves a fire had been lit; around it were sherds of a 6th-century amphora (oil-jar) that can only have been brought over from the Island, and the traces of a ritual graveside 'picnic' at the time of burial or on anniversaries (a cult known from North Africa and Early Christian sites in the Mediterranean) were clarified, when a granite stump set at the head-end of a mound grave was seen to have a neat libation hollow on its summit.

Above all this, still below grass, remains of an old churchyard wall contained greenstone fragments (from the 12th-century church's building), and an out-turned north entrance, facing a pathway to the 13th-century Castle.

The site was backfilled and turfed, the mound graves left so far untouched; the good news is that Mobil, delighted with the publicity and the community involvement, are funding a longer season in 1991 (Apri-May). We are getting back into the real Cornwall of the so-called 'Dark Ages', and there is more to come; thousands visited the 1990 excavations, and all will be welcomed in the 1991 season.

A well-illustrated Interim Report on the 1990 excavations is now available from the Royal Cornwall Museum, River St, Truro TR1 2SJ. Price £3.50 inc p&p.

Rituals and Rites at Cornish Sites

By Cheryl Straffon

Fragments of knowledge about the use of ancient sites by our ancestors is locked away in obscure references in archaeological reports, folklore and legend, and the discoveries by Earth Mysteries researchers of the special qualities of these sites. This article brings together this fragmentary knowledge to give an insight into how and why the sites in Cornwall were used all those thousands of years ago.

It is now generally recognised even by archaeologists that ancient sites were built primarily for ritual and religious purposes. Aubrey Burl himself has said: "there is nothing improbable about prehistoric man being interested in the glory of the sun and some of his constructions of stones did have alignments built into them towards midsummer sunset or moonset.... Their religious practices were often closely associated with such astronomical events."[1] These astronomical events at stone circles in W. Penwith have already been detailed in MM12, and this article takes a closer look at some of the finds at sites, and legends associated with them, that can provide indications of relevant pagan activity - fragments of those early rituals that have survived for us to interpret.

For centuries a legend existed that at the Cheesewring on Bodmin Moor a druid-priest possessed a magnificent gold cup. Whenever a huntsman came by, the druid would offer him a drink from the cup which was inexhaustible. One day a hunter determined to drink the cup dry, took the cup from the druid and drank the wine until he could drink no more. Unable to empty the cup, he angrily made off with it, only to plunge to his death off the rocks, where he and the cup were buried under a round cairn of stones. As well as having echoes of the bottomless cauldron of Cerridwen, the legend also hints at memories of a druidic priesthood who provided (through their knowledge of when to plant and reap) the means of sustinence for the tribe, and the perils of challenging or interfering with their wisdom. A twist to the tale is that in 1818 the Rillaton cairn was excavated at the bottom of the Cheesewring, and amazingly the skeleton of a man, a bronze dagger, and a gold cup were found!

The Rillaton barrow itself is near the Hurlers stone circle, reputedly men turned to stone for playing at hurling on a Sunday, a legend almost identical to that of many other stone circles in Cornwall, especially the Merry Maidens in West Penwith.* Ian Cooke[2] believes that this is a folk memory of the priestesses of the moon, a group of sacred women who used the stone circles for their ancient rituals, while the name of Merry Maidens "commemorates a circular stone temple whose shape and grading represents the waxing and waning Great Goddess - fertile mother and cruel destroyer."

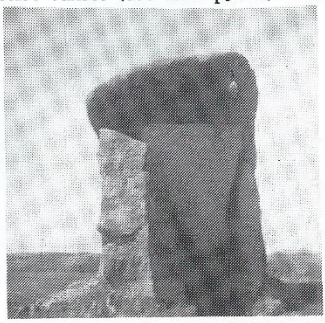
Other sites nearby have their legends too that tell of former ritualistic practices. In Boleigh Fogou a few hundred yards away the Devil was seen piping to witches who formerly held their sabbats there - a most direct memory of pagan rites.

And it has been nowhere else remarked I think that the legend is extraordinarily close to that of the Merry Maidens - in both a figure who is a Piper plays wild and strange music for a group of women (maidens, witches) who dance around. They are both surely the same memory of the same pagan ritual performed in the area, either at the time of the building of the sites or later.

Dancing around was an important part of ritual activity. The proscription at the Men-an-Tol that if you want to be cured of ailments you must crawl through nine times widdershins (against the sun) is perhaps a memory of this circular dance, itself a reflection of the movement of the sun and moon through the skies. Nine as a number keeps recurring - nine times widdershins, the 'Nine Maidens' stone circle, etc. "As with so many other rituals having their origins in ancient pagan practices the number nine crops up yet again. Nine is held to be sacred to the moon and hence the necessity of performing any ritual during the 'correct' time of the monthly lunar cycle."[2] More dancing was seen at Carn Gluze, a unique round barrow near St. Just, but this time the legend is of lights burning and rings of fairies dancing in and around it on moonlit nights. Fairies are another name for the ancient tomb builders, either themselves or their spirits, and Craig Weatherhill comments: "This is a folk memory perhaps of sacred rituals that were once performed by the last of the megalith builders."[3]

* Also Boscawen-un, Tregeseal, the Wendron circle, and the Nine Maidens stone row near St. Columb Major.

Burial chambers are one kind of site where rituals obviously took place. Aubrey Burl remarks[1]: "Gradually through the generations, the great megalithic mounds became temples as well as tombs, shrines where rituals were performed to honour the dead and ask for their assistance." Many of the entrances of the chambered tombs are orientated so as to bring the dead into association with the moon or sun, for example midwinter solstice sunrise at Newgrange in Ireland, Gavrinis in Brittany, and Bosiliack Barrow in West Penwith; and midwinter solstice sunset at Maes Howe in Orkney and Carn Gluze in West Penwith. From Chûn Quoit there is a perfect midwinter solstice sunset over Carn Kenidjack where the sun sets into a notch in the rocky outcrop. Also all Penwith entrance graves with one exception are orientated between SE and SW and fogous too have their orientations towards the midsummer solstice sunrise or midwinter solstice sunset (see MM2 p9-11). In addition some sites have curious entrance holes to allow the spirits of the dead to emerge for communion with the living. One such example is the cutaway in the dividing slab of Trethevey Quoit near Bodmin Moor. The cupmarks on the top of Chûn Quoit may also have had ritual significance, perhaps as places where libations to the dead were left, a practice still carried out up until fairly recent times in Brittany. This has parallels with the burial found under Try menhir which consisted of a cist which had contained a cremation with a beaker and an offering of meat. In other places the dead were buried in a ritualistic or symbolic way, perhaps facing a certain direction. The Bronze Age burial cemetary excavated at Harlyn Bay near Padstow revealed that all the bodies had been placed with their heads facing magnetic north.*



To many of these tombs of the dead were brought sacred offerings to make them monuments for the living. Time and again these offerings consist of quartz. The sacredness of white quartz is well attested: large quartz stones were used to line the entrance for the midwinter sun at Newgrange; to make the Samhain sunset alignments at Boscawen-un circle in West Penwith, as well as for a whole circle at Duloe in East Cornwall; and to denote the orientation of Pendeen fogou where the passage bends. But in many more sites - in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, on Dartmoor and in Cornwall - we find when we excavate that small white quartz pieces have been brought to the site and given to it. In Cornwall they have been found in the Harlyn Bay cemetary, at the Hurlers stone circle (where there was a floor of crushed quartz), under a barrow at St. Eval, surrounding the Mên Gurtha stone on St. Breock Downs, in the pit of the menhir on Longstone Downs near St. Austell, and most recently discovered at a ritual site on Trethellan Farm, near Newquay.

* This is unusual. Remains of bodies are usually found facing east or west for the rising or setting sun. Clearly here we have a ritual practice that shows an intrinsic knowledge of the magnetic properties of the earth. What that was we can only speculate about.

Aubrey Burl speculates that they might be soul-stones, symbolising the moon to which the spirits of the dead had gone. Others believe that the ancients were aware of their piezo-electric qualities and used them as energising tools, a direct link with the earth current itself. However, ultimately "one can simply observe that quartz was believed to have protective powers and increasingly during the Bronze Age in many parts of the British Isles, pieces of it were placed with the dead."[1]

In other places other kinds of offerings were left. At Gûn Rith near the Merry Maidens a beach pebble was found, perhaps indicating that some ritual involving invocation of the sea goddess had taken place there. A similar pebble was found in Obadiah's Barrow on Gugh (Scilly Isles), and Charles Thomas believes[4] that the prehistoric remains on Nor-Nor in the Scillies are evidence of a sea goddess cult in the islands which had links with Carn Gluze barrow on the West Penwith coast opposite. In a number of barrows (for example, Botrea Hill near St. Just) axe and arrowheads have been found, suggesting a ritual significance. The prehistoric Cornish axe industry was a thriving concern and Cornish axes have been found in many burial sites all over Britain. The axe heads carved on the Centre stone of Boscawen-un Circle, visible only at Midsummer solstice sunrise, may be an indication of the local importance of this cult.

Other grave goods, such as pottery, urns, glass beads, hammer stones and bronze fragmenets (perhaps from pendant ornaments or ear-rings) have been found in Scilly entrance graves. All this points to an ancestor cult of the dead, and the possible ritual activity associated with it has been reconstructed by Ian Cooke[2] as follows: "Skulls, animal bones, fire, water and quartz, fertile soil and coloured ochres, all played their part in the ancient rituals, as did presumably the use of sound, light and shade, body painting and decoration.... Many of the Quoits have small openings through which relics could be passed, and their forecourts would have been an ideal arena for the enactment of fertility ceremonies involving the handling of the bones of the dead relatives - symbolising a stage in the natural life cycle through which every living thing had to pass before rebirth and a new life."

Ritual, then, was not just part of their lives: it was the way they lived their lives, and an understanding of this unlocks the key into the world of our megalithic ancestors.

Article and photographs © Cheryl Straffon

References:
1 : "Rites of the Gods" - Aubrey Burl (1981)
2 : "Journey to the stones" - Ian Cooke (1987)
3 : "Belerion" - Craig Weatherhill (1981)
4 : "Exploration of a Drowned Landscape" - Charles Thomas (1985)

****
Kevin and Ingrid Carlyon are pleased to announce the launch of their new magazine 'Earth Magic'. For details of issue one and a free sample issue of our other mag - **Beltane Fire - send a stamp to : Carlyon, 16 Cross Street, St Leonards on Sea, E Sussex.**
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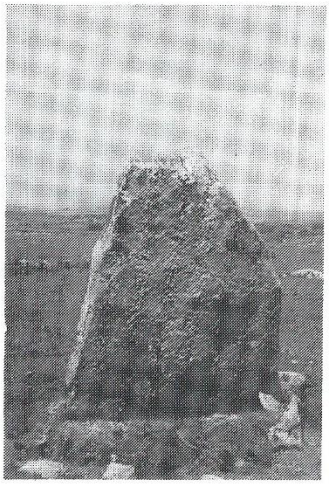
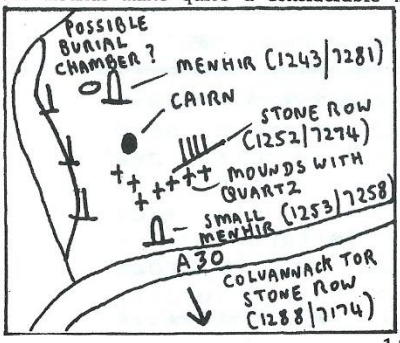
QUARTZ STONES ON BODMIN MOOR

by Chris Jenkins



On the Trehudreth Downs Bodmin Moor are some interesting ancient sites, mentioned as two standing stones in MM8 and stone rows in MM9. In fact I think the analysis of the sites should reveal that potentially we have a stone row and a burial chamber instead of a simple standing stone. I can only say that because after years of visiting sites I tend to go by instinctive feel, as well as the shapes and patterns arising from the sites themselves. In this case, the standing stone at SX1243 7281 is a slab, large and roundish in shape and more like the sort of shape one would expect to support a capstone. Indeed, other similar shaped stones lie scattered around, and although it could never be proved conclusively one way or the other I think it would be fairer to describe this site as a possible chambered tomb. Possibly a good dowser could elicit some more information. What is more, this standing stone/burial chamber aligns to a cairn and on to another smaller stone (SX1253 7258) at the top of a rise to the south, which leads on to the stone row east of Colvannick Tor.

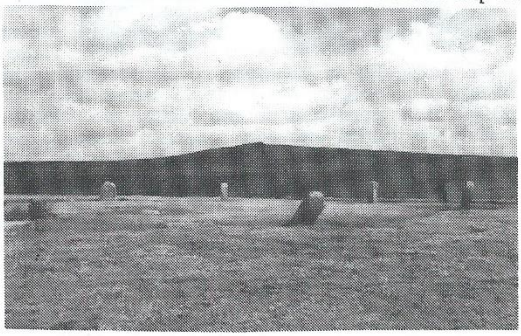
The stone row nearby at SX1252 7274 does not align on this principal cairn to its west but seems to align to a curious small mound further west. This mound is about 3ft high and is one of many I saw on this hill. What is interesting about them is that they all appear to contain quartz slabs, not big ones to be sure, but in total the mounds make quite a considerable monument. There seems to be a half circle shape here which possibly goes on to the cairns on top of Trehudreth Downs. To my best belief, I would judge them to be prehistoric structures, and the quartz placed in them is part of their interest, possibly indicating a Neolithic construction. I believe that this shows that simple small structures are just as important and powerful as the 'Silbury Hills' of this world. The patterns they make might just be the generators of energy we have been looking for. In the same way as Silbury Hill is the ideal shape, structure and position for an orgone accumulator, these aforesaid shapes may be the ideal generators of energy.



Guide to Cornish Stone Circles – 2

BODMIN MOOR

The circles on Bodmin Moor are, with a few exceptions, generally larger in area with a greater number of stones. Christian O'Brien ("The Megalithic Odyssey", 1983) believes that most of them are aligned to hill tops, cairns and logan rocks on the Moor, marking significant solar and lunar events. They can be conveniently divided into 2 areas – north of the A30, and south of the A30. A location map may be found on page 14.



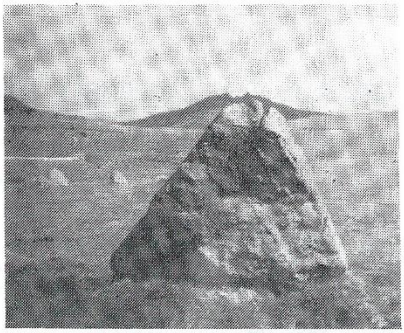
NORTH OF A30

Just off the road on the moor is a delightful site, the TRIPPET STONES (SX1312 7501). Here can be seen 8 leaning uprights and 4 fallen stones with 14 or so missing, making a total of 26 or 27. The site seems to be aligned to Carbilly Tor at the midsummer sunset or the maximum midwinter moonset

Also just visible on the horizon close to the summit of Hawks Tor (a sacred hill site?) are the STRIPPLE STONES (SX1437 7521). Rather difficult to reach and in a ruined condition (4 uprights only extant – originally 28 or 29 stones), it is nevertheless an interesting site because it is a circle-henge, the only one in the south-west, and because it has a centre stone (now fallen and broken) placed south of the centre, the same position as in Boscawen-un. It may be that when viewed from the centre stone, the Trippets would have been framed by the entrance to this circle. The midsummer sun may also have been visible rising over the Beacon 4 miles away, and to the north the 7 stars of the Great Bear pointing to the north star would have been in a direct alignment over Fernacre stone circle, Garrow Tor and Rough Tor.

To the north of the Stripple Stones are another 2 sets of multiple circles. Just over a mile away in a river valley slope above the De Lank River lies a smaller circle LEAZE (SX1367 7729) with 10 uprights and 4 fallen – probably originally 22 stones. The circle is now bisected by a wall and partially covered by gorse. The midsummer sunrise can be viewed over Garrow Tor, and Casehill Downs to the west may have formed the minimum midwinter moonset. The circle is also on a ley running from the Trippets to Rough Tor, and only about 100 yards out of an alignment between the Trippets and Fernacre Circle.

Just over the brow of King Arthur's Downs are a jumble of stones, which have been identified as the remnants of 2 possible circles, the KING ARTHUR'S DOWNS CIRCLES (SX1345 7751/1348 7750). The circles align in a WNW line (Beltane/Lammas sunset?) to King Arthur's Hall (SX1296 7765) just out of view about ½ mile away. This is a curious rectangle of 56 upright stones which Barnett ("Prehistoric Cornwall", 1982) believes was a "ceremonial structure".

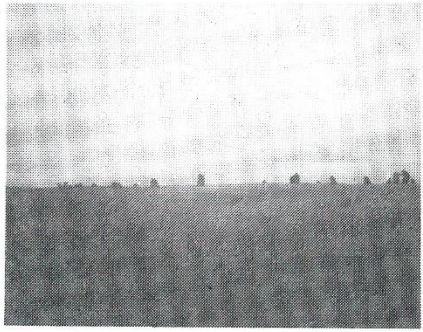


About another 1½ miles north of this complex lie the three circles of Stannon, Louden Hill and Fernacre. STANNON (SX1257 8010) is a large well-preserved circle of some 64-68 smallish stones with a setting of 4 stones to the NW from which the circle is visible on the horizon. This is a very atmospheric site with a well-attested Beltane and Lughnasad sunrise alignment from a notch in Rough Tor which dominates the horizon (see photo right). The sunrise actually happens around May 10th which is the old May Day before the calendars were altered. Here is also an equinoxical sunrise over the tip of Brown Willy to the east. From the stone setting previously mentioned, a person walking in a straight line towards Stannon Circle would find the LOUDEN HILL CIRCLE (SX1320 7949) appearing on the horizon about half a mile away. Unfortunately the circle is now ruined with only 1 upright remaining out of a probable 33-39. From the circle 2 other circles are visible - Stannon and FERNACRE (SX1448 7998), the 3 circles forming a triangular arrangement. Fernacre is another large circle in the shadow of Rough Tor with some 52-61 surviving stones out of a probable 77-95, but only a few are still standing. There may be a small outlier to the circle (see MM8 p15), and, like Stannon circle, an equinoxical sunrise from Brown Willy to the east. Two cairns to the SW & SE (Casehill Downs and Tolborough Tor) may also have marked the minimum/ maximum midsummer moonrise.

Moving eastwards, about 2 miles away are 2 recently discovered circles LESKERNICK NORTH (SX1859 7970) and SOUTH (SX1881 7961), together with a stone row. Very little now remains of either circle but the north one consisted originally of some 20-22 stones. This circle would have pointed to the equinoxical sunset over Brown Willy, and would have been in line with Stannon and Fernacre circles further west. The south circle, whose stones are all fallen, seems to more aligned to Catshole Tor in a SW direction.

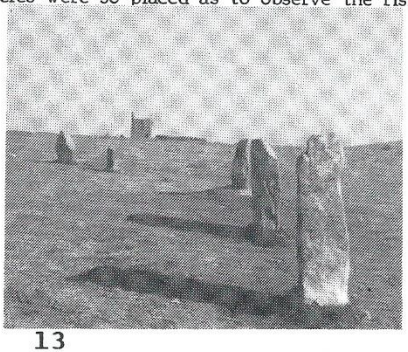
SOUTH OF A30

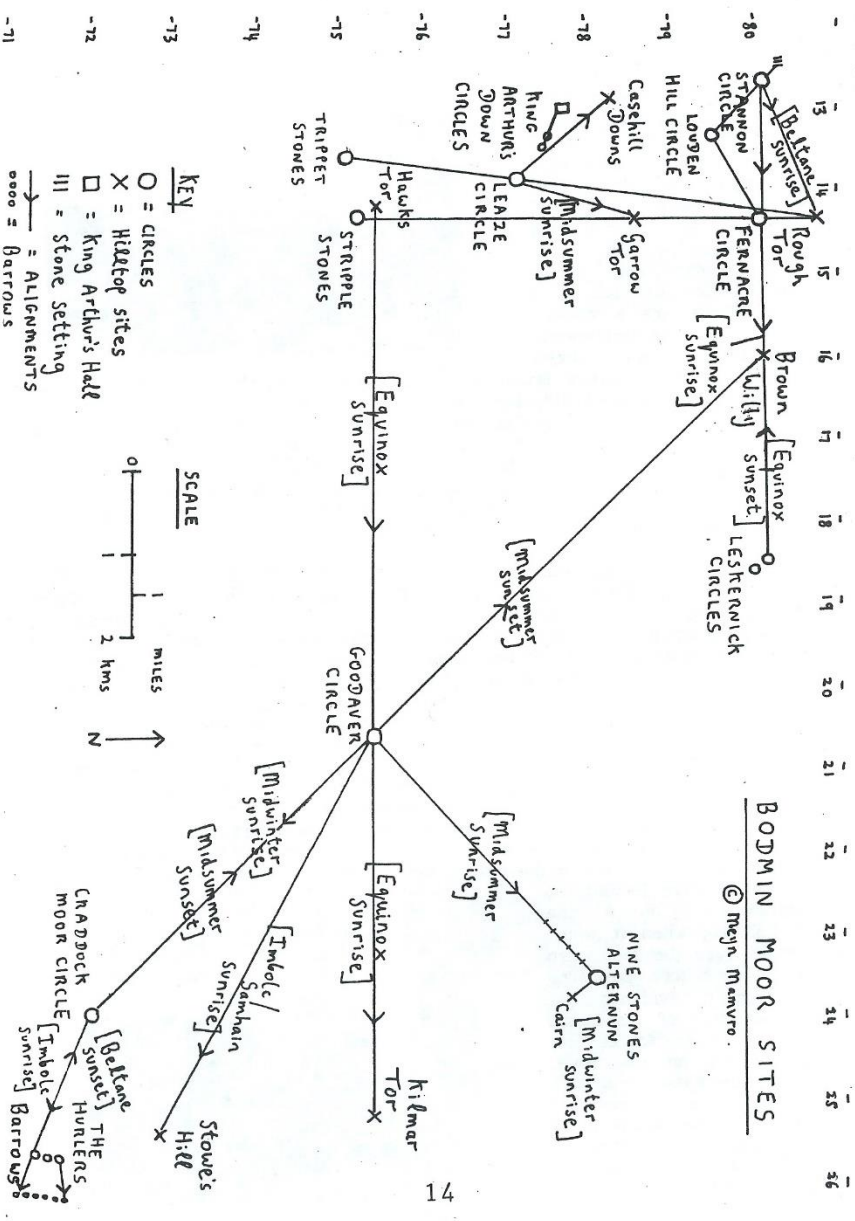
There are fewer circles to the south of the Moor, and they do not seem to have such a close relationship to each other. Isolated to the east of the Moor is NINE STONES, ALTERNUN (SX2361 7815), an attractive small circle with perhaps only 10-12 original stones. There are indeed 9 stones now remaining though only 6 are standing. There is a centre stone and stone rows running SW & ENE from the circle, although all these may be modern. Various lunar standstill alignments have been proposed from this site, as well as a midwinter sunrise to a cairn on the nearby ridge. The stone row/boundary stones running SW may have marked the midwinter sunset towards Goodaver Circle. Magnetic anomolies have also been noted here.



Some 2½ miles away to the SW not far from Dozmary Pool lies GOODAVER CIRCLE (SX2087 7515) on the top of a high ridge, originally with wide views across the Moor (now unfortunately becoming obscured owing to an encroaching forestry plantation). The circle has 22 uprights out of a possible 30-32 but has been restored. There are a number of good alignments: midsummer sunrise to Alternun Circle, midsummer sunset to either Brown Willy (Barnett) or Rough Tor (O'Brien), Imbolc/Samhain sunrise to Stowe's Hill, Equinox sunrise to Kilmar Tor, and Equinox sunset to either Hawk's Tor (Barnett) or Catshole (O'Brien). The midwinter sunrise (midsummer sunset) line from Brown Willy to the circle runs on to CRADDOCK MOOR CIRCLE (SX2486 7183) some 3 miles further SE. This virtually unrecognisible circle consists of 16 fallen and overgrown stones. Despite its ruined state it has a number of astronomical alignments: midsummer sunset over Brown Willy, midwinter sunset over Tregarrick Tor, and maximum midwinter moonrise over Stowe's Hill.

Just over the ridge from Craddock Moor lie THE HURLERS (SX2582 7139), the fitting end of our Bodmin Moor odyssey. Here lies a triple circle in a NNE/SSW direction running up a slope towards Stowe's Hill, with 2 outliers (The Pipers) to the SW. The south circle is now quite ruined, but originally would have been a site from which to have observed the Beltane/Lughnasad sunset going over the ridge to the Craddock Moor circle (or alternatively the Samhain/Imbolc sunrise would have been visible from the Craddock Moor circle rising over the ridge from Hurlers South). The central circle has 14 uprights (out of 29 original) with a restored centre stone to the south of the centre, and the north circle also has 14 upright out of 29 original. When the centre circle was excavated a floor of quartz crystals was discovered. The line of 3 circles points towards Rillaton Barrow (SX2603 7191) where a bronze-age cup was discovered (see article on p6). Barnett suggests there was a processional routeway from the Circles to the Barrow and then on to the Cheesewring, a prominent hilltop feature (although the sites are not in direct line); and O'Brien suggests the 13 barrows on Caradon Hill above the circles were so placed as to observe the rising sun on sequential days leading up to Samhain and on to the Winter Solstice, when it would have risen over the last cairn for a week before returning again. Similar evidence for such a series of landscape markers has been found near Arthur's Stone on the Gower peninsular in Wales, and such detailed and sound astronomical use for the circles forces us to re-think our whole attitude to the circle-builders from all those thousands of years ago.




BODMIN MOOR SITES
© Meyn Mamvro.
Rough Tor
Belltane Sunrise
Stannon Circle
Louden Hill Circle
Fernacre Circle
Equinox Sunrise
Brown Willy
Equinox Sunset
Lesketwick Circles
Casehill Downs
Garrow Tor
Midsummer Sunrise
King Arthur's Down Circles
Leaze Circle
Hawks Tor
Trippet Stones
Stripple Stones
Equinox Sunrise
Midsummer Sunset
Goodaver Circle
Midwinter Sunrise
Midsummer Sunset
Imbolc/Samhain Sunrise
Equinox Sunrise
Midsummer Sunrise
Nine Stones Alternun
Midwinter Sunrise
Cairn
Kilmar Tor
Stowe's Hill
Cradock Moor Circle
Belltane Sunset
The Hurlers
Imbolc Sunrise
Barrows
KEY
O = circles
X = Hilltop sites
□ = King Arthur's Hall
III = Stone setting
→ = Alignments
oooo = Barrows
SCALE
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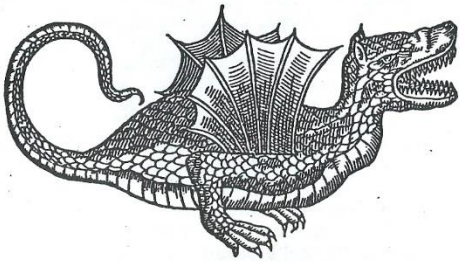
The Dragon Myth or Mystery?

by SU BAYFIELD



The dragon in its many and differing forms seems to have been in the mind of mankind since the dawn of time. It is featured in a great many creation myths throughout the world, in the earliest accounts of civilisation of Assyria and Babylon, Old Testament Jewish history, ancient texts from China and Japan, and in the Celtic mythology of Britain. Most of the creation myths begin with a battle between the forces of chaos and order, light and darkness;in many civilisations the dragon represented the Primal Mother, the great force which gave birth to the world. The ancients held that the most perfect shape was the circle. When the circle becomes a sphere it can be thought of as an egg, which some say was the Earth itself, floating upon the bosom of the first waters, until there hatched out the beginning of all things, often depicted in the form of a dragon, or serpent.

The Oxford Dictionary's definition of a dragon is "A mythical monster like a crocodile or snake with wings and claws, and often breathing fire." We are told that the dragon differs from a serpent in that it has wings, legs, ears and sometimes horns. It is often depicted as having a looped tail, a symbol of its cyclical nature and the energy it represents. In fairy tales the dragon has a scaly body and it is such a dragon that St. George fights, but Pliny and other classical writers insisted that dragons were based on an observation of nature rather than imagination. However the dragon came into being, it seems to be a versatile beast and can be connected with many types of Earth Mysteries as a symbol of invisible magical energy.

The dragon symbol has many associations. One of the most prominent aspects is that it represents the Earth's natural energies and currents present in the land and the sky. The Chinese believe that the dragon has control over the essential life-force, and in the ancient art of Feng-Shui the creative masculine Yang principle was known as the "Dragon". With skilled use of the Dragon and its feminine Yin counterpart, the "White Tiger", Chinese geomancers could carefully position buildings, shrines, trees and stones to create a natural contrast between the valleys and high places of their landscape, in order to preserve a cosmic harmony. This legendary beast is said to illustrate the cycle of the Earth's fertility. The Chinese believed that the dragon seed was produced from the Yin and Yang of Air and Earth, and born from an egg within the waters of the Earth. The process repeats itself each year, with the restoration of the Earth's fertility as the dragon grows, and then the harvesting and waning as the dragon receeds into old age and is killed. This myth parallels our own Western tradition of the Sun God's rise to power and decline, and is echoed throughout the world in fertility rites and ceremonies.

John Michell said after visiting mounds, stones and church sites in Britain associated with the dragon: "It is hard to avoid the impression that they were located according to principles similar to those adopted by the geomancers of China". Certainly the dragons of British folklore seem to personify the Earth current which flows through ancient sites. The churches and other features which stand on the many flattened artificial mounds associated with dragon stories are often found to form part of alignments. Lockyer showed that the mounds were sited to mark the directions of astronomical declinations from stone circles, e.g Silbury Hill in Wiltshire. Here in Cornwall, on St. Michael's Mount we see the beginning of a British 'Dragon Line'.. This is a straight line of earth energy which takes in ten sites associated with the dragon, going from St. Michael's Mount, through the Hurlers, Brent Tor, and on to Glastonbury Tor, Avebury Rings and beyond. (See MM8 p10 & MM9 p4). The line follows many of the churches of St. Michael or St. George, the great dragon-slayers.

When the Christian Church took over the old religion, the dragon in all its aspects was thought of as something evil. It became a Christian archetype, or thoughtform, pertaining to the monster that was the Pagan religion. A champion of Christianity then had to be brought forward - the people were fond of mythical heroes. The old serpent dragon, Satan, that St. Michael threw down from heaven is allegoric of the change from one faith to another.

The churches of St. Michael were deliberately built upon the high sacred places of the Pagan religion in an attempt to keep down the wisdom of the past, which the priests called evil. Sites such as St. Michael's Mount and Glastonbury Tor were long-established places of the old religion, and it was in these places that the rites and ceremonies invoked the life-giving force of serpent power. It was natural that these sites became the object of a Christian campaign to stamp out the ancient ways of worship. It was on St. Michael's Mount that the saint was said to appear in the year 495, and in due course a Benedictine abbey was built there.

It is interesting to find the dragon depicted in a great deal of church architecture. If the dragon symbolises the religion which worshipped and used the energies of the Earth, we must ask ourselves what it is doing inside many of our churches in Cornwall. The concept of the dragon as a fertility symbol is an ancient one; we know that the dragon had strong fertility connections in pre-Christian times. Dragons and serpents with foliage twining around them and sprouting from their mouths can be seen carved on many an early church rood screen or font. This could have been the Church's way of indicating that the dragon had been captured and imprisoned in the fabric of the church building. Or was it perhaps the individual whim of the woodcarver in a particular district? By the time of the building of parish churches in the 13th and 14th centuries, the Pagan religion may not have been quite so dead as the history books would have us believe. There are some good examples of various forms of dragons, serpents and other mythical beasts in Penwith churches such as Sancreed, St. Levan and St. Buryan, and a wall painting of Saint George and the Dragon in St. Just-in-Penwith church.

Dragon carving in Sancreed church -

There are also the well known Cornish customs of the month of May which are bound up with the legend and symbolism of the dragon. On May morning each year – from very ancient times, it is claimed – the 'Obby 'Oss of Padstow rears its dragon-like head and dances through the streets in a serpentine procession of fertility, snapping up young girls along its route. A similar spectacle can be seen a week later in Helston, during the annual Furry Dance. This too is a celebration of fertility, the continuance of life, and the marriage of the Sun God and Earth Mother. It is during this festival that the pageant of the Hal-an-Tow is performed when the young people of the town, after having been to the woods, return with green branches to welcome in the summer. Here the red dragon is slain by St. Michael, the patron saint of Helston, symbolising presumably, the Christian conquest of the Pagan customs. The fact that the festival is still performed today is evidence that the old ways are still remembered.

May Day is also featured in a dragon legend at Mile Hill near Portreath. Between midnight and sunrise on this day a dragon who regularly stole and ate sheep and cattle in the neighbourhood was fought by a huge white spotted dog until the dragon was despatched in the direction of the sea. This too may be a memory of the conquest of the old pagan ways: an ancient 'dragon-path' or ley runs through the area where the Dog and Dragon resturant now stands, and the legend may also be a memory of the Earth's natural energy currents.

In Celtic countries the dragon was often a symbol of pride and glory. Wales still has its dragon emblem on the national flag. In Cornwall, legends of King Arthur abound, and Arthur himself fought under the banner of the red dragon of Uther Pendragon, from whom he claimed his kinship. The red dragon was originally a British or Pictish emblem, said to have been brought to these shores by the Celts. Later quarrels and civil strife in the Celtic countries were distinguished by the colours of the dragon standards, the red being the Pagan emblem and the white being the emblem of the followers of Christ. Arthur is said to have changed the colour of his standard at Glastonbury, accepting the Christian faith and fighting under a personal white banner. The cross and sword became the common emblem, the light of the new faith being indicated by white, or brightness, symbolised by the unity of the dragon and the white horse of the sun: hence, the Unicorn. The red dragon, however, is still a perpetual reminder of the teaching of our mysteries and the wisdom which we have inherited.

Article © Su Bayfield.

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Cornish giants in the landscape

By Tony Roberts

Tony Roberts had a prophetic visionary approach to the power of the land and was a leading light in the Earth Mysteries field for a number of years. On 9th February 1990, the day of the full moon eclipse, he climbed Glastonbury Tor where he had a massive heart attack and died. In one of his last letters, sent to "Meyn Mamvro" a week before his death, he commented: "Your lucent magazine is vitally important as a true psychic bridge between past and present." As our psychic link to him, we are proud to print his 2-part article on Cornish giants.

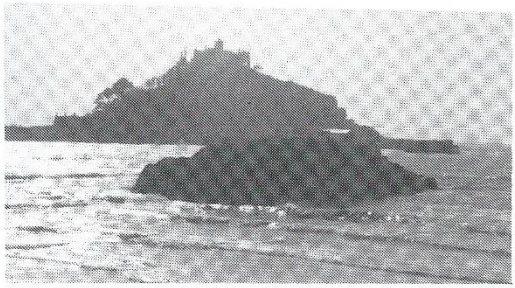
Memories of giants are found woven into every aspect of the British landscape where they conjure inescapable geomythic patterns that are constantly visible to the awakened imagination. Numerous megalithic structures are attributed to giants, the very landscape itself often being likened to the slumbering body of a huge, dreaming entity; this is important because the whole essence of a geomantic culture lies within the framework of its 'giant' imagery. Countless legends of these beings surface in every corner of Britain but they are most prevalent in the west, looking towards the restless, legend-filled depths of the Atlantic Ocean. Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Wales (not to mention Scotland and Ireland) have dozens of folk-tales recounting the boisterous exploits of these awe-inspiring creatures in landscape engineering. magical practice, sports, building, warfare and religion. Like their companions in myth, the fairies, giants are always associated with the oldest of relics, namely the earth-works, mounds, standing stones and related structures that remain from the days before records. Mountains and hills, often conical in shape and associated with vital powers of deep mystical significance, are named after them. Such names as 'Giant's Leap', 'Giant's Grave', 'Giant's Rock', 'Giant's Pass' etc., abound and throughout western Britain there are strong giant legends attached to many sites which were later sanctified by the Druids and, after them, by the early Christians. All of these sites have maintained a continuous religious character for millennia.

The memory of the giant is perhaps strongest throughout Cornwall, particularly in the small triangle of land embracing Land's End, St. Ives and Penzance. There is frequent mention of named giants being involved with the artificial structuring of the landscape (geomancy) and this is where the exoteric and esoteric aspects of giantism are seen to meet and mesh. Tales are still told today delineating the giants' role in earth-moving, rock-piling, river-shaping and performing all the other numerous functions attributed to a geomantic civilisation. One such legend can be recounted here: it is a tale indigenous to the parish of Gorran Haven near St. Austell, an area of south-eastern Cornwall that is rich in legendary and earthen monuments.

On the promontory of Gorran there lies a long earthwork, running from cliff to cliff. It exactly divides off one hundred acres of ground and is twenty-four feet high, the work according to legend of a giant who hacked out the cut in one night by using his magical powers. This fortification is accepted as a genuine prehistoric structure and is known as the 'Thica Vosa', or the 'Hack and Cast'. The giant ruled the area, living within the fortified earthwork and generally behaving in a manner not inclined to endear him to the local, smaller residents; it appears he assiduously devoured their stray children. One day this Swiftian-type gourmet ate a child who, when finally digested, gave him a dose of severe food poisoning. The local doctor was brought in and, climbing the rampart of Thica Vosa, he found the giant rolling in agony on the grass. Being an astute (as well as a frightened) man, the doctor resolved to be rid of the titanic tyrant once and for all. He told the worried giant he must be bled and that a large hole in the cliff should be filled with his blood. This 'cure' bled the giant to death, for the hole never filled; when the creature was weakened enough, the doctor rolled his body over the rocks and into the sea. The nearby promontory known as the 'Deadman' or 'Dodman' is named after this specific giant's demise. The curious stone blocks where he 'fell' are called the 'Giant's House' and the blood hole has ever since been amenable to a luxuriant growth of ivy. A grim Cornish tale certainly, matching the rugged, simple grandeur of much of the county's often blighted yet powerfully evocative terrain.

Geomythically interpreted the legend has some important points to make: the earthwork was created by 'magic' (intimations of divinatory geomancy); the giant was the local ruler (indicating great age as well as interesting sociological implications); his death was decidely sacrificial and ritualistic (this will be echoed in other tales to be given later). The association with Dodman Point is intriguing geomantically, for 'Dodman' was a term for the surveyor/technician of the megalithic culture-bearers. Ivy has long been a plant with serious pagan/magical/witchcraft connections. And finally, the existing 'literary content' of the story is perfectly indicative of the sad deterioration of the whole genre. The often crude and humerpous manner in which these tales are recounted belies the underlying seriousness of their meaning, but this is only to be expected after the passage of thousands of years. The fundamental strength of mythology is that it always retains a precious grain of poetic truth no matter how much the details of that truth are warped by time.

Bearing this in mind, the strange but powerful legends that surround St. Michael's Mount begin to take on a fresh meaning and substance. The Mount itself is one of Britain's foremost conical hills, set some way out into the sea off the coast near Marazion. The old Cornish description of St. Michael's Mount can be roughly given as 'carrick luz en cuz', meaning "the ancient rock in the wood"; and at low tide the fossilized remains of a forest can be detected around the island's shores. The origin of this now sea-bound, tree-clad island is attributed to the industry of two giants, a husband and wife partnership which laboured on its construction for many weary months. The giants were said to have built up the already-existing promontory by carrying huge blocks of white granite down from the neighbouring hills. The era in which they performed this arduous task must have been extremely remote because, according to the legend, what is now Mount's Bay was then dry land covered by a thick forest populated by many supernatural creatures. The giant builders were called Cormoran and Cormelian and it appears that the wife Cormelian was forced to do the bulk of the work, a condition not unnatural to male/female relationships in many species. The legend goes on to say that the two giants carried the granite blocks in their aprons and that one day, while Cormoran was exercising his usual supervisory privilege by sleeping, Cormelian decided to make her task easier by collecting local greenstone rocks from nearby the mount. Cormoran awoke while Cormelian was transporting a huge greenstone and, in a rage, he kicked his unfortunate companion, breaking her apron strings and causing the rock's fall to the ground. Today the partially submerged causeway that leads to the Mount has a solitary greenstone rock marking its beginning: it is called Chapel Rock, a significant name in a geomantic sphere of reference. It is a definite hint that here lies the realm of ancient religious ritual, suddenly transformed into the sharper terminolgy of nascent Christianity. Another important point in this legend is the emphasis on white granite.



Many prehistoric religious sites feature white granite, sometimes as boulders, or sometimes as tiny pebbles, like those that cover the key mound of New Grange in southern Ireland. White granite carries a preponderance of quartz, an esoteric mineral which has highly potent magical and electromagnetic properties that were well known to the ancients. The 'broken apron strings' motif appears throughout British giant-lore as well as in Scandinavian, Indian and American legends, usually in conjunction with alignments of megalithic stones or, sometimes, linked to free-standing boulders.

One more curious fact about St. Michael's Mount bears scrutiny here: it relates to the finding of a giant skeleton buried in the heart of the hilltop church itself. The church was rebuilt in the fourteenth century on the old foundations of a building that had been thrown down by an earthquake in 1275. That church was erected in the twelfth century, replacing an even earlier structure that is thought to have replaced a setting of megalithic stones, a not unusual sequence in the history of such religious sites (Glastonbury's St. Michael's has a similar history). The current church possesses a secret, underground chamber that probably existed beneath all the previous ecclesiastical structures that stood on the summit of 'the holy guarded mount'. Underground chambers are extremely rare in Christian buildings, for they smack of esoteric orders and pagan initiation rites, highly appropriate of course to a hill such as Dinsul, once dedicated to the worship of the sun. A similar ancient chamber exists across the channel in the foundations of Mont St. Michel.

During the fourteenth-century rebuilding of St. Michael's, the intact bones of a huge man were disinterred, rather on the lines of the earlier exhumation at Glastonbury Abbey. There was no stone marker for the giant skeleton and it was incoffined; admittedly he had been placed in the raw earth, but the very place he was buried was the secret heart of the sacred hill. The bones were reverently removed and first re-buried in the north court, but in 1864 they were yet again transferred to a final resting place in the Mount's small cemetery. According to the Mount's archives, the shin bone of this 'giant in the earth' was larger by one half than that of an ordinary person, making the man about eight feet tall, or about the same height as his counterpart who lay beneath the pyramid stones of Glastonbury Abbey. It is tempting to think that this skeleton constituted the remains of the giant Cormoran but alas, it is rare for geomythical corroboration to be so perfectly explicit. The sudden 'Christianisation' of St. Michael's Mount has never quite thrown off the earlier auras of pagan sanctity and giant imagery. The puzzled monks who discovered an eight-foot skeleton under a secret chamber must have thought the old demons were returning to haunt them and, in a certain sense of cosmically poetic correspondence, they were and always will, for such is their role in the continuously unravelling pattern of cyclic cosmic consciousness. The past is in the present, the present is in the past.

The second part of this article will appear in the next Meyn Mamvro.

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BOOK REVIEW

CORNWALL'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE
Nicholas Johnson & Peter Rose (Twelveheads Press, £2.50)

Cornwall is well served for guide books on her archaeological heritage: there are Craig Weatherhill's "Belerion" & "Cornovia" (recently reissued), Ian Cooke's "Journey to the Stones" and Guides to specific areas (reviewed in MM12), plus of course MM's own 4 page guides in each edition. So any new title really needs to find a niche in the market not already covered elsewhere. This booklet is not as comprehensive as "Cornovia", nor does it have the depth of the Cooke books. But it does have the advantage of being up-to-date in its archaeological research, being written by two members of the CAU itself, and, in its 48 pages, covering a selection of 88 of the most accessible sites, ranging from the neolithic right up to the mediaeval period. It also contains photographs, maps and drawings, so as a general introductory guide it must be good value.

However, although there is much to commend here, I do have some reservations about the introductory essay giving an overview of the prehistory of Cornwall. While the archaeological detail itself cannot be generally faulted, there is a curious reluctance to give much credence to certain aspects of the sites. Although the megalithic sites are acknowledged as "places for the public performance of ceremonial and ritual", the nature of that ritual is not touched upon. Indeed, standing stones are dismissed as "probably marker stones...memorial stones, grave markers, way markers or territorial boundary stones." This is perverse in the extreme: there is no evidence for this interpretation and it flies in the face of both ley and astro-archaeological research. Even John Barnett from the archaeological establishment, whose book "Prehistoric Cornwall" is listed, was discussing both astronomical and ley alignments in 1982 in that book. And more recently, Ian Cooke in "Journey to the Stones" has shown that fogous were also systematically orientated to significant solar events. Cooke's book is not even given in the reading list, and there really is no excuse for the CAU to ignore these areas of research, even if they do not accept them in totality. The booklet acknowledges for example that sacred wells had a pagan origin, that henges had a ritual function, and that fogous could have been for "religious" purposes [though it still repeats the old chestnut - without any proper evidence - about them being refuges (with no exit?) or cold stores (dripping wet?)!] So why exclude the relationship of these ritual monuments to the seasonal round and the landscape?

Part of the problem is that archaeologists are not encouraged to look at the sites in the way ancient peoples did, seeing the earth as a living being and the sites within the context of the totality of the landscape and skyscape. So there is no consideration of the relationship of the stones to horizon features and to each other, no appreciation of the alignment of sites towards the sun and moon, and no knowledge of the energy anomolies found at the sites. So although it is refreshing to read that "In the early Bronze Age it seems certain that religion and ceremony were inseperably woven into the fabric of everyday life", there is no weaving of that into an understanding of the meaning of the sites today. Until archaeologists can take that on board, such guide books as this will remain useful but ultimately lacking in real perception. (CS)

NOTICEBOARD

CORNISH EARTH MYSTERIES GROUP is planning a regular programme of talks and discussions this Winter at the Green Centre, Penzance. For further details please send a SAE to Carol Bishop, 3 Coulsons Terrace, Penzance or ring (0736) 60288 (evenings).

WEST PENWITH PAGAN GROUP usually meet around the Full Moon for discussions, ritual workshops, etc. For further details contact Meyn Mamvro or ring (0736) 787612.

MID-CORNWALL PAGAN NETWORK (logo right) aims to bring people together for sharing, learning and for increasing awareness. Contact Reg & Pam, 4 Addison Terrace, Bodmin Hill, Lostwithiel or ring (0208) 872929.

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Events Diary

WINTER LECTURES at R.I.C (Truro Museum) on the second Monday of each month starting Oct 8th with "Stonehenge: whose landscape?" Also LECTURE by Peter Fowler on "Cornish Landscape and beyond; scientific, fantastic and holistic" Fri Nov 30th.

EVENING CLASSES on the archaeology of West Penwith at Penwith 6th Form College, Penzance starting Tues Oct 9th & Bodmin Moor at Padstow Junior School starting Thurs Jan 24th 1991.

ONE-DAY SCHOOLS at Hayne Corfe Centre Truro: "Neolithic archaeology in Britain - an update" Sats Nov 24th & Dec 8th, & "Adams Rib: Womens studies in archaeology" Sat Feb 16th 1991.

For further details of the above courses contact Hayne Corfe Centre, Truro on (0872) 74503.

The Pipers Tune

The current London Earth Mysteries Journal* contains some interesting articles, including a report of a Field Trip to Cornwall in 1989 by Bob Shave and others. MM readers might like to read an extract from their account:-

"The weather pattern for the weekend was set as we entered western Cornwall: driving rain and strong winds - welcome to West Penwith! Our first port of call was Zennor Quoit which Chris led us to unerringly, despite its near perfect camouflage in rockstrewn moorland. We then made our way to St. Just where Cheryl Straffon lives with her husband, in what must be the first row of houses in Britain to be hit by the Atlantic gales. We were kindly invited in and offered tea, while Cheryl told us about her Beltane celebrations at dawn that morning at a local site. Then folowed a guided tour around some of the best known and most mysterious ancient sites of the Lands End peninsula. I will not describe every site in detail, giving instead brief impressions.

Tregeseal stone circle: this with a few holed stones is near the village of St. Just. What struck me particularly on our arrival here was the way no one in our party wanted at first to enter the circle, instead standing around the perimeter. It took a small but noticeable effort to walk inside.

Chûn Castle: an Iron Age hill fort, built of stone instead of earth embankments. A forbidding place. The rain returned here for a time and there was hail.

Chûn Quoit: comparitively welcoming, a place of peace as perhaps one might expect of a burial chamber. I have a photo of it, showing us townies desperately seeking shelter from the rain behind the quoit while Cheryl, the local, stands quite unworried in the open, laughing it off.

Mên-an-Tol: the famous circular holed stone accompanied by two standing stones. Rob performed the ritual passage nine times through the holed stone. At the bottom of the hill we visited the Men-an-Tol Studio where Iân Cooke, the artist and writer works. He observed that the weather meant that we would have the sites more or less to ourselves. His own view is that many sites feel quite dead in, say, August and we sympathised with this view.

Boscawen-un Circle: perhaps my favourite site of the ones we visited. When you finally reach the circle, it is like stumbling across some private, magical garden. This was a place where I think each of us became lost in our own thoughts for a while.

Merry Maidens Circle: a neat tidy site where I felt there was something missing, a site somehow empty compared with the other two circles.

My remaining impression of West Penwith is of a land needing time and patience to get to know it. The landscape seemed to welcome us but only up to a point - as if to say, you can come this far but no further. She yielded partially to our exploration, but she also spat rain and hail, froze us, sent us away baffled, wanting to know more. Perhaps we will always feel like outsiders in this land. We are only 20th Century townies after all!"

* LEMC Journal - 2. 68p. £1.75 by post from address in Exchange Listings opposite.

EXCHANGE MAGAZINES

MEYN MAMVRO now exchanges with the following magazines which we consider are all worthy of support:

EARTH MYSTERIES & SACRED SITES

THE LEY HUNTER - National mag of Earth Mysteries (Annual sub:4 issues £6) PO Box 92, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2XL

NORTHERN EM (Annual 3 issues £2.95 single £1.15) - Rob Wilson, 40b Welby Place, Meersbrook Park, Sheffield S8 9DB

GLOUCESTER EM (Annual 3 issues £5 single £1.50) GEM, 49 Moorend Rd., Leckhampton, Cheltenham, Glos GL53 0ET

LONDON EM - Occasional mag & regular programme of events. Details Rob Stephenson, 3 Buckneills Drive, Bricket Wood, Herts AL2 3XJ.

TOUCHSTONE - SURREY EM. (Annual 4 issues £2) J.Goddard, 25 Albert Rd, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey

MERCIAN MYSTERIES - Midlands EM (Annual 4 issues £5) - Paul Nix, 12 Cromer Rd, St Ann's, Nottingham NG3 3LF

MARKSTONE - N. Lincs EM.(£1.35/issue) Jane & Bob Dickinson, 17 St Andrews St, Kirton-in-Lindsey, Gainsborough, Lincs.

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THE FOUNTAIN - Earth healing& dowsing. (Annual 4 issues £6, unwaged & OAP £3.20). Box 915, Seaford, East Sussex.

RILKO (Research into Lost Knowledge Organisation) (Annual 2 issues £5.50) 10 Kedleston Drive, Orpington, Kent BR5 2DR

EARTH PULSE - New EM contact network. 14 Linden Close, Exmouth, Devon EX84JW

PAGANISM

THE CAULDRON - Pagan journal of the Old Religion (Annual 4 issues £4 single £1) Mike Howard, Caemorgan Cottage, Cardigan, Dyfed, Wales SA43 1QU

THE PIPES OF PAN & Pagan Parenting Network Newsletter (Annual 3 issues £3) Pagans Against Nukes, Blaenberem, Mynyddcerrig, Llanelli, Dyfed, Wales

WOOD AND WATER - A Goddess Inclined Eco-Pagan Magazine (Annual 4 issues £4.00) 77 Parliament Hill, London NW3

DALRIADA - Celtic clan pagan journal (Annual 4 issues £4.50 single: £1.25) Clan Dalriada, Dun-na-Beatha, 2 Brathwic Place, Brodick, Isle of Arran

THE UNICORN - Paganism today (4 issues £4) PO Box 18, Hessle, East Yorkshire

THE DEOSIL DANCE - New Age of Paganism (Annual 5 issues £5.50) Noddfa, Llithfaen, Gwynedd, Cymru LL53 6NN

QUEST - Pagan magic mag. (Annual: 4 issues £5.00/Single copy £1.50) Marian Green, BCM-SCL Quest, London WC1N 3XX

MOONSHINE - Paganism for self and planet (2 issues £2.60) 498 Bristol Rd, Selly Oak, Birmingham

BELTANE FIRE - Earth Magic (Annual 6 issues £3 sample 50p) 16 Cross St. St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN37 6DP

HARVEST - US neo-paganism (Annual 8 issues $25) PO Box 228, S Framingham, MA 01701, USA.

OTHER

ASH - Albion's Sacred Heritage (Annual 4 issues £4.50 Sample £1.25) 2 Kent View Rd, Vange, Basildon, Essex SS164LA

HIDDEN HISTORY - Ancient lore (4 issues £4.50) APRA Press, 443 Meadow Lane, Nottingham NG2

MEYN MAMVRO is available on annual subscription - 3 issues £5.00 (inc p & p) from 51 CARN BOSAVERN, ST JUST, Nr PENZANCE, CORNWALL TR19 7QX. MM14 due out Spring 91 will feature the ritual use of fogous, alignments and stone rows.

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