



MAYTIME IN CORNWALL ● HAL-AN-TOW
THE LIZARD STANDING STONES & STARS
BRYHER BURIAL ● NEWS & REVIEWS ●

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Meyn Mamvro

STONES OF OUR MOTHERLAND

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

Much work behind the scenes has been going on to move the application forward for Objective One and other funding for the Ancient Sites Management Officer [ASMO], first proposed by the Sacred Sites Network Group. Penwith's Economic Development Unit Objective 1 Officer, Rob Poole, has been co-ordinating meetings with interested parties in the area, including Penwith Council and representatives from local landowners, such as the National Trust, the Bolitho Estate, the Tregothnan Estate, etc. Through these meetings it has become clear that the maintenance and management of the sites is quite low on the list of priorities of these landowners, which perhaps explains why so little has been done in the past to protect and conserve the sites. It is hoped that if we get the funding for the ASMO, that s/he will be able to work more closely with these bodies and help to change attitudes. The main tasks of the ASMO would include:-

- to set up and manage a team of volunteers to monitor the condition of ancient sites and report any damage and problems affecting site access and usage
- to identify and prioritise work needed to improve and manage access and use of the sites
- to liaise with landowners, archaeologists, local government, official bodies and special interest groups to promote the care of ancient sites
- to set up and manage teams of volunteers to carry out work to improve and manage access to and use of the sites
- to liaise with and involve existing voluntary organisations such as BTCV in the care of ancient sites
- to involve local schools and the wider community and to carry out a programme of education and information about the sites.

Support for the ASMO post has come not only from groups such as the Cornish Earth Mysteries Group, Penwith Pagan Moot, Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, the Pagan Federation, ASLaN and Meyn Mamvro, but also from bodies such as the National Trust and the Cornwall Archaeological Unit (now renamed the Historic Environment Section), the latter of which has been very solid and strong in its backing. The application for funding (£260,000 over 3 years) has successfully cleared a number of hoops, but the real test is yet to come when it moves forward to the Regional Council of the Objective One funding board. At the same time matched funding is being sought through the Heritage Lottery Fund. There is everything to play for at this stage, but if all goes well then the Project will go live in October 2002. MM will report more next issue.



news page

The 12th annual series of talks began at The Acorn in Penzance on Nov 29th with a slide talk by **Andy Norfolk** on “Faeries, strange lights & Celtic gods”, which covered about everything! Andy drew together strands of earth mysteries and anomalous phenomena research to show that many of the themes that run through EM research can be linked together and shed light on each other. This was an up-to-date and perceptive presentation by someone who besides being a Committee Member of CEMG continues to be in the forefront of contemporary earth mysteries research and ideas.

The evening also had a presentation by **Anna Crowley** on the Tree of Life Gardens Project with which she is involved in West Penwith [see p.4 for more details]. It would be fair to say that her Project was not met with universal acclaim among the audience(!), and challenging questions were asked about the claimed effect on the energies of the existing ancient sites, the use of crystals for the pathways, and the appropriateness of the culturally different Tree of Life (kabbalah) concept being imposed on the native land of West Cornwall. There was a very lively discussion later amongst the audience about all of this.

Sunday Dec 22nd saw the 11th annual **Chûn Quoit** walk to see the midwinter sunset alignment, which as usual was cloudy over the horizon, but which also included the perambulation of the Quoit, the chanting of the sun down and a moment's perfect silence. This was followed by the annual **Celtic Storytelling** at Age Concern in St. Just, with food and drink to share. There was the usual wonderful mix of stories, some not so very Celtic, and part 2 of Paddy's hilarious saga featuring a host of strangely familiar local characters from the EM and pagan communities!

Winter/Spring Programme 2002

Jan 31st “The Carn, the Knocker and the Reliquary: Rock-ancestor dreaming in the prehistoric south west” - Caradoc Peters

Feb 28th “Haunted Penwith” - Ian Addicoat

March 28th “Giantesses and Virgins: Goddess sites of Malta and Ireland” -

Cheryl Traffon & Sheila Bright

April 25th “Peculiarities” - Martin Matthews (Curator of Helston Folklore Museum)

*Full reports of these talks and presentations will appear in the next MM.
Details of Summer Activities are on the Noticeboard on the back page.*

Penwith Pagan Moot



by Sarah Vivian

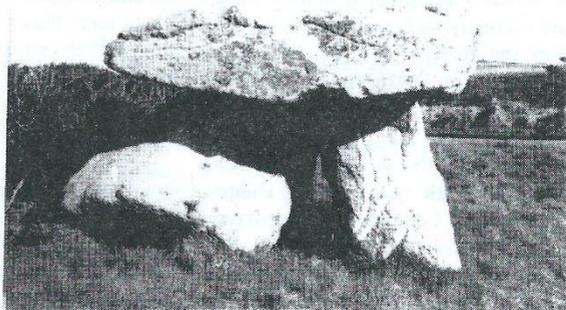
Since writing for the last issue of MM, the Pagan Moot has celebrated several more festivals. For Yule we held a large party at St.Buryan Village hall, which we decorated with lights and greenery, noticeably large bunches hanging from the beams like chandeliers. Imbolc was held at Sancreed House, in the beautiful conservatory. We were blessed with the weather, as there were storms for several days both before and afterwards, but the day of our ritual was graced with sunshine. So we were able to walk up to the Holy Well for a blessing, appropriately holding the promise of Spring, with purple crocuses at the well an intimation of the flowering abundance yet to come.

At the time of writing, we are looking forward to our next ritual at Eostre or Spring Equinox, which falls this year on Weds 20th March and our ritual will be on Sat 23rd. Up until now we have held our rituals on the exact day, but have now decided to move to the nearest weekend to avoid clashing with people who prefer to do their personal and private rituals at the exact time. For Spring Equinox we are hoping to go to a beautiful wooded valley with a stream, owned by friends, and our ritual will focus on honouring natural spirits, especially the spirits of the wonderful trees there. These rituals are always open to all, everyone welcome, so please ring for further details if you are interested in coming to any of them this summer.

The monthly moots, which are also open to all, take place on the second Tuesday of the month at Chy Gwella, 53 Morrab Road, Penzance. This is a forum for news, events and planning for upcoming rituals or workshops, and there is also a special topic for each session. Recent topics have included Gypsy magic, Irish witchcraft, Holy Wells and Tree Lore and Ogham. For further details please contact either:- Sarah Vivian, 24 Queen St, St.Just, Penwith TR19 7JW. (01736-787522) or Andy Norfolk, The Cottage, Crowan, Praze, Camborne TR14 9NB (01209-831519)

PENWITH'S NEWEST DOLMEN!

A new dolmen has appeared in West Penwith on a triangle of land where 3 roads meet! The mini-cromlech was erected on the road to the Mên-an-Tol by a local farmer with a megalithic bent!



SACRED SITES NEWS * SACRED SITES NEWS

FIREPITS CLEANED UP AT ANCIENT SITES

A task force of members from the Sacred Sites Network Group and the Pagan Moot spent a day going around some of the major sites in West Penwith clearing up the unsightly firepits that had been left there in 2001, and returning the areas. Amongst the sites that were affected by such thoughtless firebuilding were the Mên-an-Tol stones, Tregeseal Stone Circle and Sancreed Well Chapel. The programme of trying to educate people who visit the sites not to build fires and firepits continues, and the local pagan and EM community are hoping that this summer will not see their annual reappearance.

TREGAMINION WELL RESTORED

The restoration of Tregaminion Well at Morvah by the Morvah Schoolhouse Trust [see MM45] has taken a further step forward. The old ugly pumping station has now been demolished, and the area around the well surround enclosed. Meanwhile a special leaflet about the history of the well and its restoration (with text by MM editor Cheryl Traffon) has been produced and is available at the Schoolhouse, at St.Just Library/TIC. Copies may also be obtained direct from Meyn Mamvro (please enclose a SAE).

THE TREE OF LIFE TRIES TO GROW IN CORNWALL

The Tree of Life Project, which aims to set up a 100 acre site in West Cornwall, with the help of Lottery and other funding, has provoked a great deal of local controversy amongst the earth mysteries and pagan communities. Described as “a unique sensory experience of light, sound and movement in 10 one-acre gardens, set amongst 22 crystal paths”, the Group say they have chosen Cornwall “because of the extraordinary energies within the land and the county’s age-old tradition of working with the Earth”. However, they also say that their Garden will help to re-activate the leys and earth energies in the Land and at the sites, and that they intend to link the gardens together by pathways of crystal “activated by solar and sonar currents”. It is this latter approach that has caused most opposition, with many people feeling that it is out of harmony and keeping with the natural sites and energies of West Penwith. The Group are currently looking for a site large enough to meet their needs, hopefully a site that they can reclaim, and are planning to present their scheme to the public with an Exhibition in Penzance. However, they recently suffered a setback when they were turned down for Objective 1 funding, which was a key element in their scheme.

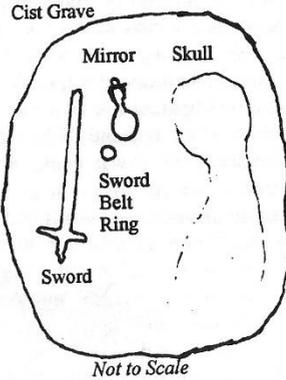
CONVENTIONS & CONFERENCES

May 18th-19th Society of Ley Hunters Convention 2002. Bath Spa University College, Newton Park Campus, Bath. Speakers: Paul Devereux & Hamish Miller. £10 (£5 concs. Free to members). Details: PO Box 1634, Hassocks, Sussex BN6 8BZ.

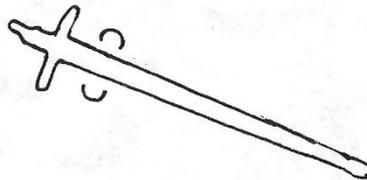
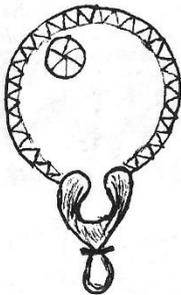
July 6th-7th ASLaN (Sacred Land) Conference. Winding Wheel Centre, Chesterfield. Presenters inc: Richard Bradley, John Barnett. Details PO Box 333, Banbury OX168XA

THE SWORD AND THE MIRROR - PRIEST/ESS BURIAL ON BRYHER?

More information has emerged about the Iron Age cist grave discovered on the island of Bryher on the Scillies in 1999 by tenant farmer Paul Jenkins [see MM40 & MM43]. In addition to the sword (some 34 inches in length) in a bronze scabbard, the mirror that was also found has yielded up some of its secrets. Upon cleaning, it was revealed that it was beautifully decorated with an elaborate curved handle and a border of incised chevrons around the rim of the mirror. Also it appears that in the top left part of the mirror there was a circular decoration with spokes that could have represented the sun. In addition in the original grave there was a brooch, a ring from the sword belt, a shield, and a spiral ring and a tin object.



The tin object is now shattered but English Heritage have speculated that it may originally have been a decorated bronze canister, similar to the one found in a female cart burial from Wetwang Slack in East Yorkshire. It has also been suggested that the mirror, together with another one discovered in a burial mound at Trelan Bahow on the Lizard Peninsula in 1833, could point to them being prototypes for other mirror burials, about 20 of which have been found in other parts of Britain. Although it has not been possible to determine the sex of the grave's occupant from DNA samples taken, it begins to look as if it may have been not a warrior burial, but perhaps a high-status person from the priestly caste. Charles Johns from the CAU, who led the excavation, has even suggested that the mirror may have been used for scrying or prophecy rather than a personal adornment. Bearing in mind that at the time of the burial (somewhere between the 3rd-1st Century BCE) Bryher was part of the same island that also included Nor-Nour (Bryher on the west side and Nor-Nour on the east), it is also fascinating to speculate that this clearly very important burial may have been of a priest/ess of the Goddess Sillina herself, who was celebrated and worshipped on this Scilly island.



The Mirror and the Sword (illustrated left not to scale) are now on display at the Isles of Scilly Museum on St. Marys.

DOWSING & OTHER REACTIONS AT SACRED SITES

"I find it fascinating to watch the reaction of visitors to some of the ancient sites. At the **Merry Maidens** stone circle women entered the circle with joy on their faces, but the men were more apprehensive. One man picked up an object placed behind a Goddess stone to see what it was, but when he realized that it held a plaited straw pentacle, he dropped it quickly and left the field. At **Boscawen-ûn** stone circle while I was investigating the view of the site from the wall, I noticed my three friends talking animatedly at one end of the stones and then they moved to the other side of the circle. Wondering what was going on, I went back to join them, only to see one friend fall forward, exclaiming as she did so! She said that it felt as if something had wrapped her feet up in something warm and comforting and then she had pitched forward. Three of us found ourselves falling in same the same direction, but interestingly, our German companion swayed the other way. For the rest of the time, we investigated the "lines" as shown in the diagram in *The EM Guide to Ancient Sites in West Penwith* [MM Publications] and experienced being pushed either forwards or backwards as the "line of force" changed direction. This was the second time I had experienced sensing a ley line. The first time had been in Hanbury Church in Worcestershire as part of an Earth Energies worship. Then I just about felt the direction, but it was thought that the ley had been "corrupted" in some way because it made all of us feel very uneasy and being in its vicinity made me feel sick after an hour or two. The feel of the energy was very different at Boscawen-ûn...very gentle and positive. The other thing I noticed was sensing energy with my hands at the stones, themselves. I'm a spiritual healer and I'm used to sensing energy from people, plants etc as a cushion between my hand and the individual/object. At the stones it was very different, with the energy being felt on the back of my hands, forcing them towards the stone. This was the first time I'd felt energy in this way. Have other people experienced this with the stones?"

Finally, in the two fields above **Porth Lunny** beach near to Mevagissey are two standing stones...or at least stones that resemble other standing stones and appear to be in line with Gull Rock. No mention of these stones appear in any of the Cornish guides to sacred sites. Does this mean that the stones were erected by an enterprising farmer to act as backscratchers for his cattle? Hidden behind some trees near to the stones is a ruined building, which, to judge by the double layer of wall, might well have been an abandoned dwelling. Can anyone identify the age of these stones, as it's something that has been puzzling me for the past four years?"

Sarah Head, Solihull

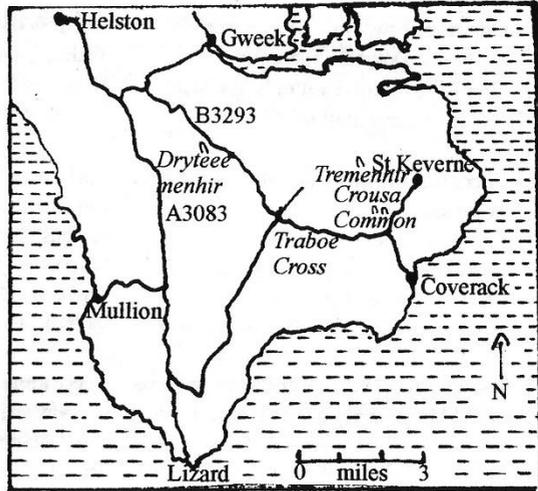


STANDING STONES ON THE LIZARD PENINSULA

by **TED JEFFRIES**

The Lizard is one of the quiet areas of Cornwall and is notable for a large area of flat open land, including Goonhilly Downs and stretching right to the sea in the west at Predannack Cliffs and to the southernmost point at the Lizard lighthouse, which was the first sight of land for vessels sailing up from the south. Some very early sites on The Lizard have produced where evidence of human habitation dating back to at least 5000 BCE. Prehistoric pottery made on The Lizard has been found in Northern France and in Lincolnshire, so there was evidently active trading going on in those times.

Ted Jeffries lives at Porthallow Vineyard near St. Keverne on the Lizard peninsula. Both he and his wife Sheila have researched in detail the stones and their astral alignments and patterns in this area.



And, like other prehistoric peoples in Cornwall, they erected stones. On Bodmin Moor and in West Penwith the existence of many standing stones is obvious. They are big, often on high places, and there are many of them. The Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Monuments Record lists 239 standing stones of which most are on Bodmin Moor and in the west. Until recently, the Lizard peninsula was well off the beaten track and the stones have received little attention. There are very few tall ones and there are none on high places, so the stones are not noticeable, particularly in the summer when much of the open ground is covered in a blanket of gorse up to 10 feet high. I live on the Lizard and over the years have come to know many of the local stones and ancient sites. I have also visited many prehistoric locations in other parts of Cornwall and it has become clear to me that there are many significant differences between the stones there and on the Lizard. From these differences one could infer that the stones were erected by different peoples with different cultures and for different reasons. Generally speaking, the stones in the Bodmin Moor area and in West Penwith show many similarities: there are stone circles, quoits, big single stones, and straight lines of stones. But on the Lizard there are patterns of small stones, which seem to be related to the patterns of stars in various constellations.

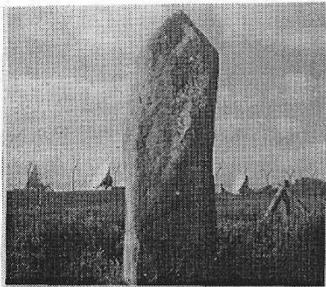
Differences between the stones of Bodmin Moor/West Penwith & The Lizard.	
Bodmin Moor/West Penwith	The Lizard
1. More than 200 standing stones	At least 129 standing stones
2. Many large stones, more than 6ft tall	Only 2 stones more than 6ft tall
3. Many constructions: stone rows/ quoits/circles	No constructions, no quoits/circles
4. One stone row, Nine Maidens on St. Breock Downs, apparently aligned to rising point of bright star Deneb in constellation of Cygnus.	One row of stones centered on Traboe Cross Traboe Cross, apparently aligned to Deneb. 10 stones that appear to be in position of stars in the constellation of Cygnus.
5. There seem to be no significant patterns of stones.	There appear to be a number of patterns of stones arranged in the layout of the stars in various constellations e.g Cygnus, Leo, Orion, Delphinus, Lepus, and maybe more. There is also one group of tumuli in the pattern of stars in the constellation Lyra.
6. There seem to be no significant patterns of field boundaries (stone hedges).	There are a number of patterns of field boundaries, most noticeably a pattern of five small fields on Goonhilly built in the out- line of a sheep's head [see OS map 80SE]

Map Details

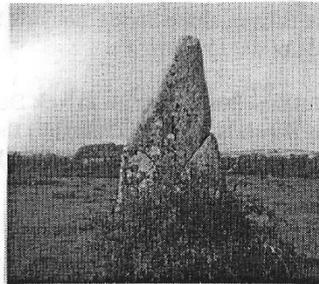
The OS maps are invaluable for field research but the modern maps are of little use for our purpose. In the last hundred years there has been a lot of building work that has covered up some ancient detail. In some cases, such as the construction of Predannack Airfield in 1940, wide areas of ancient sites have been completely covered over. I have found that the most useful set of maps for ancient research are the 1908 OS edition. This is available at a scale of 6 inches to the mile (880ft to 1 inch). As it was printed in 1908 and is out of copyright, we have been able to get photocopies from the Cornish Studies Library in Redruth where there is a complete set.

The detailed information is precious. The survey work was actually undertaken in 1871, and the surveyors took the trouble and had the time and interest to mark and record ancient stones, burial mounds, hut circles, stone crosses, "Roman Camps", hill forts, and so on. Armed with a sheet of this map you have a very good chance of finding many of the sites which they recorded. For example, sheet OS 81 (south-west), one of the Goonhilly sheets, shows 30 standing stones, 29 tumuli, 14 hut circles, two "camps", and one stone cross.

Standing Stones & Tumuli on the Lizard Peninsula from 1908 OS maps			
<i>Sheet Reference</i>	<i>Number of stones</i>	<i>Tumuli</i>	<i>Hut Circles</i>
81 SW Goonhilly	30	29	14
89 SW	15	8	
85 NE	-	-	
81 SE	14	3	
81 NE	10	-	
89 NE	13	-	
85 NW	-	5	
85 SW	-	4	
80 SE Goonhilly	2	32	24
80 SW	5	4	
84 NE	11	12	
84 NW	3	2	
84 SE	9	6	
80 NE	14	9	
81 NW	3	7	
77 SW	-	3	
76 SE	-	1	
Total	129	125	38



Drytree menhir, Goonhilly Downs



Tremenhir stone, nr.St. Keverne



Crousa Common stones, E of Traboe Cross

CYGNUS

There are megaliths all over Britain and Ireland, and they are arranged in circles, ellipses, straight lines and other forms. An analysis and survey of more than 600 groups of stones from the Outer Hebrides to Cornwall was carried out by Professor Alexander Thom of Oxford University. This showed that many groups of stones had an extra-terrestrial alignment, with various combinations of stones pointing to significant places related to the sun or stars. Some alignments point to the place of sunrise at midwinter, midsummer or the equinoxes, or to the rising and setting places of stars. Consideration of these arrangements has led to the opinion that some stone circles were made to be calendars, showing the time of year, whereas the lines of stones are more likely to have been used to indicate the time at night from positions of the stars.

Bright stars that are easily identified were chosen. It is very interesting to discover that there are sufficient separate bright stars in suitable places to enable a very realistic estimate of the time throughout the night. Here is a typical sequence observed from one place at midwinter:-

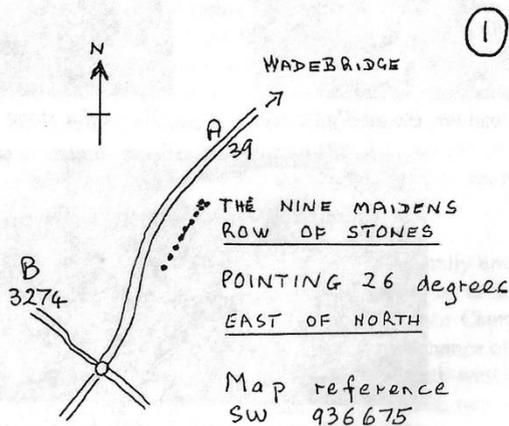
2am - Sirius setting. * 4am - Altair rising. * 5.30am Capella setting. * 7am Pollux setting. * 8am sunrise.

As time passes during the year we move around the sun and so look into different areas of the sky, so different sets of stars have to be observed. Some stars are high in the sky and appear to move around the North pole star. They can be seen for most of the year so are very useful for calculating the passage of time. The bright star Deneb in the constellation Cygnus is a circumpolar star. It is below the pole star at midnight in midwinter, at 6.30pm at the Spring Equinox and at 6.30am at the Autumn Equinox, so it is a very useful star to know.

The Nine Maidens Stone Row [St.Breock Downs - SW936 675]

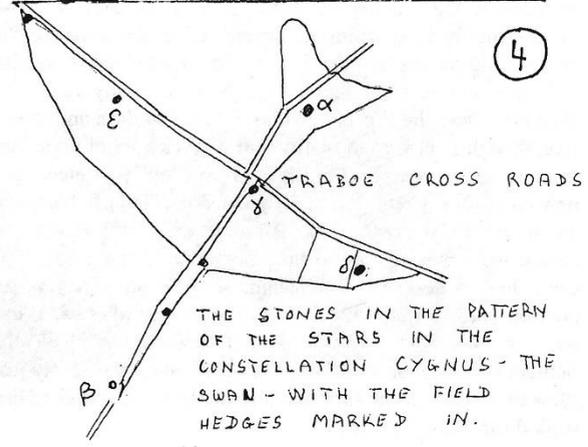
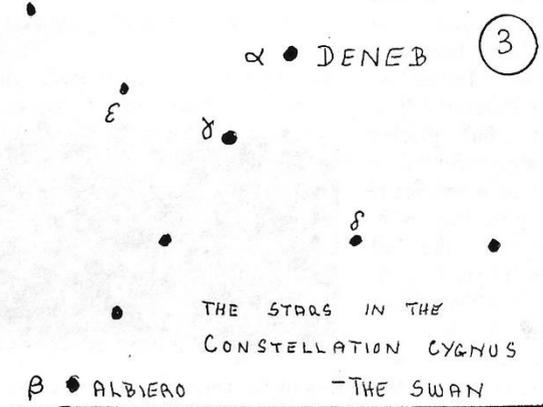
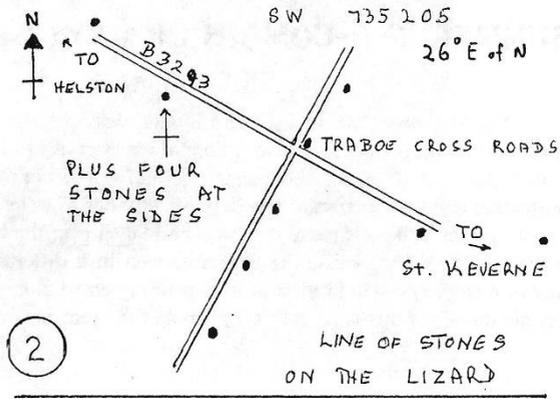
The rising of Deneb is clearly indicated by the alignment of these standing stones, seen at the side of the A39 on the road to Wadebridge.

This line of stones points to Deneb at an angle of 26° east of north. The total length of the line is about 80yds and they are mostly about 5ft above ground. The head of the row, where Deneb would be, is marked by a group of 3 stones, which, when they were first erected, may have been a sighting arrangement.



The Traboe Cross row [on the Lizard - SW735 205] This is a row of five stones, again pointing to a spot 26° east of north, marking the rise of Deneb. This row of stones is over a mile long. Although this row is similar in concept to the Nine Maidens there are very important differences.

This diagram [right] shows the pattern of the main stars in the constellation Cygnus, the Swan. As can be seen, the central row of stars is five in number with the bright star Deneb at the top. The five stones in the row on the Lizard are arranged in a similar pattern in the places of those five stars. In the constellation there are two stars on each side of the main row. These are also represented by stones in the Lizard construction so this is more than just a row of stones pointing to a single star; it is a model of the constellation Cygnus in the shape of a swan.

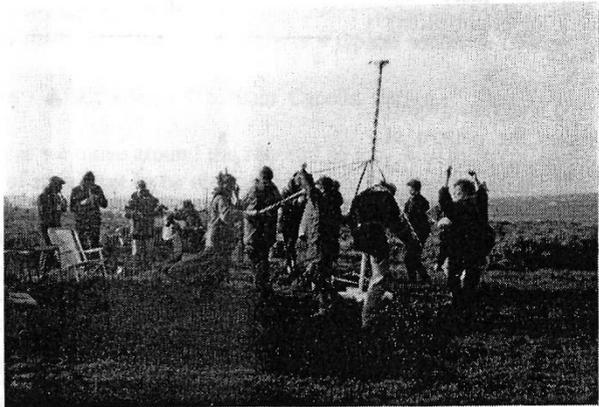


SUMMER IS A-COMING IN: MAYTIME IN CORNWALL

by Jill Millington

The May-Day/Beltane festivities in Cornwall are truly aMayzing! While the rest of the country thinks of the time as a time of street protests or the coming Bank Holiday, if they think of it at all, the pagan/alternative communities in Cornwall are busy celebrating an exciting vibrant few days of activities to welcome in the Summer. This is just one person's experience of that weekend taken over the last few years. Every year it is slightly different, because the events happen in a different order, and everyone has their own slightly different view of it, depending on what events they attended and what they did there, but this is what this highspot of the year means to me.

For me, the Beltane festival always begins with the May Day Eve Maypole Dance on Carn Bosavern. It is often a dull, gloomy or windy evening - one year it was foggy and misty to boot, though for the last couple of years ago it has been beautifully sunny. But whatever the weather, it never



seems to dampen the spirits of the participants, who come to dance the sun back and welcome in the summer - and they usually succeed! When we arrive, the tent is always up and the food beginning to appear inside, the Maypole stands proud with its ribbons tied waiting for the first dancers, and the musicians are beginning to tune up. It seems as if it has always been there, though it was only revived 13 years ago, and that it disappears into the West Penwith mist for 364 days and then reappears again on Beltane Eve, though I am sure in reality that it takes a lot of organising by the team. I have been to most of the evenings, and it is always lovely to meet up with old friends and make new ones. One recent year it all seemed particularly harmonious, coinciding with a full moon on the day itself. There is always great enthusiasm for the dancing nowadays, as people whirl wildly around the maypole and the coloured ribbons twist into beautiful Celtic knot patterns. The musicians seem to stay later every year, and the dancing now goes on until sunset, with a lovely big bonfire afterwards to sit around or jump over in ones or twos, making our Beltane wishes and dedications for the coming year. Sometimes I stay until the end, but often I like to go away just before the end, seeing the glow of the fire in the distance and hearing the sound of drumming still going on as I walk down from the Carn.



Jumping the Beltane fire

A couple of years ago there was a real surprise at the event. A group of Mummers turned up to perform a special Beltane Mummers Play. Hailing from the Grampound area, they specialise in performing Mummers' plays at inns and other places, taking the spirit of this folk tradition back to the people. A group of 8 or 9 colourful and lively performers enacted a rite of a summer play, with singing, music and dancing. It featured the traditional St. George, a fair maiden and the Dragon, but the pagan twist in this playlet was the presence of Herne the Hunter who came to represent Mother Earth and brought the Dragon back to life by taming it and making it peace-loving in the process! As both the Dragon and Herne were played by women that also gave the performance a much less aggressive and conflictual feel than usual. It was a fun, joyful and exuberant occasion that was a perfect part of the evening's activities.



The Mummers Play at the Maypole Dance

Over the next few days there are usually private Beltane celebrations. One year a group of us rose at 5am for our Women's Group celebration. We went together to Boscawen-in circle: the morning was dry and warm with a low-lying mist that promised a beautiful day. It was a lovely ritual, incorporating purification, letting go of things from the past year, healing, self-dedication and raising energy for the hurt and dispossessed of the world, for Mother Earth and for ourselves. With much chanting, drumming and 'wild women' energy we whirled around the stones, our headdresses of interwoven flowers weaving and twisting, as we danced the Beltane morn alive. We finished by washing our faces in the morning dew of the grass. Another year three of us went to a private stone circle in some woods. One of us had Aphrodite, Goddess of love and passion, invoked into her. It was a warm afternoon and we were skyclad in our private wooded area. Two of the women went to seek gifts for Aphrodite from the woods and when they came back Aphrodite gave them something to experience with eyes closed for each of their senses - tinkling bells to hear, bluebells to smell, strawberries to taste, Goddesses to touch and a candle to see and light for passion. We made vessels of earth and leaves and flowers and drew up energy from the earth, and then danced naked through the woods, raising energy and power for Beltane. It was a very sensual, earthy and uninhibited ritual.

A more public ritual usually takes place over this time at Harmony Pottery, where Geraldine and Paddy open their beautiful place for pagans from all over Cornwall and Devon to come and celebrate the festival. Often about 50-70 people turn up for this event! Although the event varies from year to year there is usually an opening ceremony, involving invocation of the Beltane meaning, a blessing of everyone in the circle, dancing around the Maypole (again!), perhaps a visit to their sacred grove, jumping the Bonfire, and much feasting and drinking! The interest in such get-togethers seems to be growing year upon year, and it sometimes feels as if Cornwall is the epicentre for this pagan revival! The Carn Brea Morris Men are also around on May Day morning and in the area to add their own brand of celebration into the melting pot.



Beltane celebrations at Harmony

After all these days of celebration, it is hard to imagine anything else, but the best is yet to come! Often it is a case of getting home, throwing clothes and drums into a heap in the corner of the room, collapsing exhaustedly into bed, and then getting up the next morning to carry on with the next event, all the while running on reserve fuel! And most energy is needed for the climax of the whole Beltane period - the Obby Oss at Padstow. Fortunately, this "last living pagan festival in Europe" provides its own stimulation with the amazing heartbeat sound of the drums, the wild playing of the accordian music, and the raw primitive energy of the swirling skirts of the man-Oss, led, guided and drawn through the streets by the Teaser. The Oss (either Red or Blue for there are of course two of them) is in the blood of every man, woman and child in Padstow, and one of my delights each year is to watch some of the older women dancing together or with the Oss, and some of the young children and babes in arms moving with the music and the dancing. They are the next generation of the Oss's followers, and ensure that it will never die out.



I usually arrive in time to see the Red Oss leave its stable at the Golden Lion around 11am. The Blue Oss is already out, and I love following them both at different times in the day, the Blue Oss because there are better dancers and singers with it and the Oss "dies" and is stroked back to life more often, and the Red because it seems to have much more primal on-the-edge energy and power about it. Very occasionally it will grab a woman and pull her beneath its skirts, a very real enactment of the sexual and fertility aspects of the Festival. I remember in 2000 hearing about one woman Karin Heath who was "taken" this way. She emerged from the Oss's skirts, looking slightly shaken but beaming and said: "It was totally unexpected. It was great though, because he was just groping me all over! It was an excellent experience - I can highly recommend it! I'm coming back for more next year!" There speaks the true Beltane spirit! Sometimes it seems as if the man who is in the Oss gets taken over by the spirit of the Oss itself, and he moves in a wild elemental almost "crazy horse" way, and then some of the other followers move in to calm him down, or perhaps take him out from the Oss and lead him away looking dazed. The teasers and the dancers too seem to move with the Oss in a sensual ritualistic way that seems to hark back to a wilder more ancient time.

One of the wonderful things about the Obby Oss is that you can relate to it at all sorts of levels. It is not a tourist spectacle or a parade that you have to stand back and watch, although of course many people do line the streets to wait for its passing. But others, including me, follow the Oss as it moves around the town, and in some years, such as last year when there were less crowds, or in the quieter parts of the town, it is possible to actually dance with the Oss, stroke its tail and touch its skirt for luck. Or sometimes I move along next to the accordion players or the drummers, and then the music fills my head and moves my spirit. Last year my friends and I just kept dancing and dancing and singing the “Unite and Unite” song through most of the day. By the time the evening came I was so exhausted I thought I could not move another step, but then around the corner would come the drumbeat and the music again, and once again we were off, the energy of the Oss carrying us forever onward. In the evening for the first time, the two Osses meet up around the Maypole, and dance together in mock combat with the dancing Teasers. One of the most powerful and moving moments was watching the two Osses ‘die’ together for a few moments, as the crowd sang softly to them and stroked their manes. Then with a wild roar they were up again, led and teased off through the streets by the dancers and musicians. We followed the Red Oss finally as it danced through a narrow street and into a pub, and then finally left Padstow in a trance-like state, satiated and satisfied for another year.

And that is perhaps a good place to leave Beltane in Cornwall. There are even more events later on that one can attend. The first Sunday in the month brings the Three Wells Walk, a lovely means of touching the Land and Mother Earth as she awakens after winter and displays all her finery: the colourful display of bluebells, the white three-cornered leek with its pungent garlic smell, the yellow gorse that sometimes has a delicate aroma of coconut, the gorgeous pink campions and of course the fluffy white blackthorn blossom. The walk goes through a variety of different terrains: fields, a hill fort, a fogou, woods, open ground, across a Carn, up green lanes, down by hidden streams and bridges. It is a gentle stroll with time to talk to friends and take in the surroundings. I usually hear my first cuckoo of the year on the walk, and sometimes the swifts and swallows have returned to herald the season. We visit the wells and collect the water and give blessings for the arrival of another Summer. I return home nourished and fulfilled, though usually with aching feet and thighs! And then on the 8th of the month there is the Helston Furry Dance and the exciting Hal-an-Tow for those who want more Beltane energy! But for now that is enough: the memory of that May Day/Beltane period in Cornwall stays with me a long time, and the Padstow song in particular continues to echo around my head:-

*Unite and unite and let us all unite.
For summer is a-come unto day,
And wither we are going we will all unite
In the merry morning of May.*

The joy and power of the Maytime revels and celebrations in Cornwall sustain and enervate me for a long time afterwards. Would that we could live like that always!

OLD MAYDAY CUSTOMS IN CORNWALL

from "Cornish Feasts and Folk-Lore" - Margaret Courtney [1890]

In the beginning of (the 19th) century, boys and girls in Cornwall sat up until twelve o'clock on the eve of May-day, and then marched around the towns and villages with musical instruments, collecting their friends to go a-maying. May-day is ushered in at Penzance by the discordant blowing of large tin horns. At daybreak, and even earlier, parties of boys, five or six in number, assemble at the street corners, from whence they perambulate the town blowing their horns and conchshells. They enter the gardens of detached houses, stop and bray under the bedroom windows, and beg for money. With what they collect they go into the country, and at one of the farmhouses they breakfast on bread and clotted cream, junket, etc. An additional ring of tin (a penn'orth) is added to his horn every year that a boy uses it. Formerly, on May-morn, if the boys succeeded in fixing a "May bough" over a farmer's door before he was up, he was considered bound to give them breakfasts; and in some parts of the county, should the first comer bring with him a piece of well-opened hawthorn, he was entitled to a basin of cream.

In West Cornwall it is the custom to hang a piece of furze to a door early in the morning of May-day. At breakfast-time the one who does this appears and demands a piece of bread and cream with a basin of 'raw-milk' (milk that has not been scalded and the cream taken off). In Landrake, East Cornwall, it was the custom to give the person who plucked a fern as much cream as would cover it. It was also a practice there to chastise with stinging nettles any one found in bed after six on May-morning. Young shoots of sycamore, as well as white thorn, are known as May in Cornwall, and from green twigs of the former and from green stalks of wheaten corn the children of this county make a rude whistle, which they call a "feeper". Until very lately parties of young men and women rose betimes on May-day and went into the country to breakfast; going "a junketing" in the evening has not yet been discontinued. At Hayle on May-day (1883) as usual, groups of children, decorated with flowers and gay with fantastic paper-clothes, went singing through the streets. In the evening bonfires were lit in various parts of the town, houses were illuminated with candles, torches and fire-balls burnt until a late hour, the last a new and dangerous plaything.

On May-morning in Polperro, the children and even adults go out into the country and fetch home branches of the narrow-leaved elm, or flowering boughs of white thorn, both of which are called 'May'. At a later hour all the boys sally forth with bucket, can or other vessel, and avail themselves of a licence which the season confers - to 'dip' or wellnigh drown, without regard to person or circumstance, the passenger who has not the protection of a piece of 'May' conspicuously stuck in his dress; at the same time they sing 'The first of May is Dipping-day'. This manner of keeping May-day is, I have heard, common in Cornwall. At East and West Looe the boys dress their hats with flowers, furnish themselves with bullocks' horns, in which sticks of two feet long are fixed, and with these filled with water they parade the streets and dip all persons who have not the sprig of May in their hats.

THE HAL-AN-TOW: AN ANCIENT MYSTERY

by Kelvin I. Jones



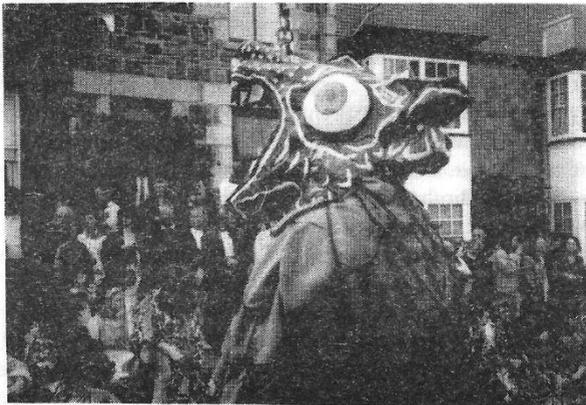
Kelvin Jones as the Green Man at the Hal-an-Tow

On each May 8th, early in the morning, a curious collection of people assembles at the old bridge which spans the River Cober in Helston. On this day the townspeople of Helston are busy re-enacting a strange ritual for the awakening of the earth's energies so that the summer may commence. This is Furry Day to many of the older inhabitants, but to those who adopt the parlance of the 18thC it is of course Flora Day, so named after the Roman Goddess of flowers and fertility, Floralia.

As the bystander watches, s/he becomes aware of a certain marked difference about the hundred or so folk who have appeared and who now form themselves into a circle, marked by a rope which is stretched by the onlookers. They are all dressed in an antique and somewhat bizarre manner. Some are dressed as men of the woods, whilst a collection of women appear festooned in greenery. On enquiry, these women call themselves "hedges". It seems a fitting name. But there are others here too. There is Robin Hood and Maid Marian. There is Friar Tuck and Little John (holding his staff proudly!). There are some curious looking Mediterranean gentlemen called Spaniards. They are led in chains by a small company of sailors. There is a person dressed as St. George and one dressed as St. Michael. There is a magnificent dragon; there are maids and there is also a devil. But what on earth is their purpose?

As the company reach the bridge, they are seen to be blowing on whistles, banging sticks and setting off klaxons. As soon as they are still, they then re-enact what can be described as a "pageant", although this is like no other pageant you might have seen. It is a pageant which is sung. The song itself has a number of verses, none of which appear to make much sense to the innocent bystander. Although Flora Day is clearly a very important fertility rite, its gentility seems almost overwhelming. This, on the other hand, seems wild, anarchic and sometimes absurd.

The Hal an Tow almost died out. But not quite. Thank goodness, then, that we have it still, for amid the polite and genteel eighteenth century charm of the Flora Day there is still a memory of the May Day games of our ancestors, when the tribe from the place of the estuary and the dunes came up through the forest where they had made their bower in honour of the King of the wood and his May Maid to awaken the old town of Helston by the blowing of whistles and the banging of drums. At the River Cober, right up until the early part of the 20th century, men and women would be challenged to pay up or they would be taken astride poles and hurled into the river. Sacrificial victims to the River Deity? Perhaps so, for the name Cober is one of several Celtic names for the River Goddess, as Professor Charles Thomas pointed out long ago in his pamphlet *Totem and Taboo*. This is where it all began, so long, long ago. Down by the river, early in the morning, when Jack in the Green awoke the power of Summer and announced to all who might listen, that "Summer is acumen in and Winter's gone way O".



The Dragon at the Hal-an-Tow

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WHO WERE URSULA BIRDHOOD & AUNT MARY MOSES?

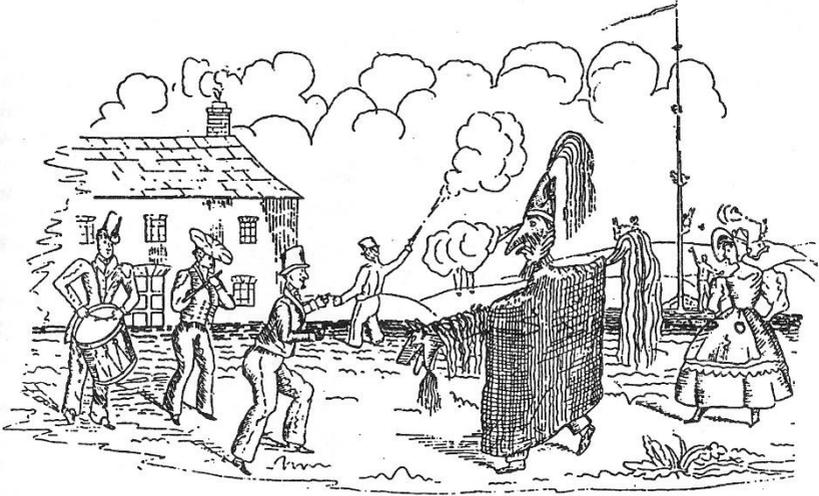
by Cheryl Traffon

Many of the words of the Padstow Obby Oss song and the Hal-an-Tow at Helston do not appear on the surface to make much sense. They evidently refer to people and events, the key to which we have since lost. At the Padstow Obby Oss, when the Oss “dies”, the singers mournfully sing:-

“O where is King George, O where is he-O
He’s out on his long boat, all on the salt sea-O
Up flies the kite, down falls the lark-O
And Ursula Birdhood she had an old yow (ewe)
And she died in her own parc-O”.

Who this Ursula Birdhood was has been thought to have been lost in the mists of time. But interestingly a reference in a book entitled *West Country Hobby Horses* by Herbert Kille, first published in 1935¹, says: “The original horse...is attended by five men, respectively designated as Signor Brentano, Colonel de Bato, Don Carlos de Bato, Trevathen Red and Lively Mac. Up to the middle of the last century [*sic*] one of the party was dressed as a woman in scarlet cloak and cape.” Could this “woman” have been a representation of Ursula Birdhood? It is said that in former times an old woman in a scarlet cloak would stand at the Quayside and watch the Oss perform², and certainly in the mid 19thC one of the “Mayers” (a kind of older May Queen) was always an old woman in a scarlet cloak and cape. From 1889 to about 1914 there were two women “Mayers”, Chrissie Anna Bray and Elizabeth ‘Drucker’ Prynne.³ Kelvin Jones has suggested [pers.com.] that this “old woman” Mayer eventually became the present day Teaser, and there are reports of the Teaser formerly being a man dressed as a woman, sometimes even with make-up and a handbag! William Thomas, a Teaser who lived from 1894-1977 is recorded and photographed in a dress⁴ and he reputedly also wore silk underwear! This role reversal is part of the whole anarchic anti-conventional tradition of May Day festivals and customs, but one wonders if in this case there is a link back to “Ursula Birdhood”.

The presence of a crone-like figure at these festivities also has parallels in the Helston Hal-an-Tow. In one of the verses of that song there is a reference to “Aunt Mary Moses”. Kelvin Jones says of her: “In the ritual of the Hal an Tow the assembled company would bow down to her at the end of the dance. She was obviously much revered. She bore a floral crown about her head and often wore a cloak”.⁵ He also goes on to suggest: “Figures of old women like Aunt Mary Moses [and Ursula Birdhood] are not uncommon in May ceremonies and were certainly representations of the Great Mother Goddess who certainly predated Christianity in her popularity”. Although this can only be speculation, nevertheless the presence of the old crone at these ceremonies in representation or in song evidently harks back to an archetypal figure.



Earliest known engraving of the Padstow Oss, from about 1838. Who is the figure standing just behind the Oss watching it dance. Could it be "Ursula Birdhood"?

At Padstow the woman in scarlet stood at the Quayside and it was to the Quayside that the Oss would formerly go and be submerged in the sea.⁶ The old people said it was once believed that this ceremony preserved the cattle of the inhabitants from disease and death, so the 'Old Crone' may have been directly linked to the renewal and transformative powers of the Oss. In the Obby Oss song it is an old ewe who dies in Ursula Birdhood's arms (or possibly Ursula Birdhood herself), sung at the point where the Oss "dies", to be immediately followed by a shout of joy as the Oss is reborn again. In the Hal-an-Tow the song asks Aunt Mary Moses to "send all her power and might". Both Ursula Birdhood and Aunt Mary Moses seem to be powerful figures presiding over the death of winter and re-birth of life at Spring. They may indeed be aspects of the Earth Mother herself.

References:-

- ¹ Herbert Kille *West Country Hobby Horses* [Pub. 1935. Reprinted Oakmagic Publications, 1999] p.15
- ² see Kelvin I.Jones *The Hal an Tow - A May Day Game* [Oakmagic Publications, 1999] p.14
- ³ see Donald R.Rawe *Padstow's Obby Oss* [Lowednack, 1971] p.20
- ⁴ photograph reproduced in Kelvin I.Jones *The Hobby Horse - an enigma?* [Oakmagic Pubs.1999] p.19
- ⁵ Kelvin I.Jones *The Hal an Tow - A May Day Game* *ibid* p.14
- ⁶ Herbert Kille *West Country Hobby Horses* *ibid* p.17-18



BOOK NEWS & REVIEWS

St.Nectan's Glen - its History and Legends by Kelvin I.Jones (Oakmagic 2001,£3.95)

This is an immensely important book of research and re-evaluation that is belied by its pamphlet-looking appearance and low price. St.Nectan's Glen near Boscastle has become a very emotive site, as correspondence in previous MMs shows, and there is certainly an 'understanding' in pagan circles that it is a very mystical and magical place, redolent with the echoes of the saint/hermit Nectan who once lived there and whose name may derive from a Celtic water-god. Well, mystical and magical it may undoubtedly feel to the modern sensibilities, but, as Kelvin Jones shows in this carefully researched book, much of the mythology and legend surrounding the place is a modern invention



ST. KNIGHTONS KIEVE NEAR BOSCASTLE

"In the legend of St.Nectan's Glen" observes Kelvin Jones, "we have a carefully constructed myth, tailor made for the neo-pagan New Age movement". This book strips away the layers of the myth to show that the saint St.Nectan was only grafted onto the place in 1864 by the Rev. Stephen Hawker. Before that it was actually known as "Nathan's Cave" (references of 1799 & 1820). By 1828 it had become "Nathan's Kieve" when Boase used the Cornish word, meaning a 'cauldron, bowl, tub or vat' to describe it on a map, and then by 1831 St.Knighton. In 1823 the newly-married Stephen Hawker came to the area, and, inspired by the beauty of the Glen, wrote a poem about the spot entitled "The Sisters of the Glen". In the poem he does not name the Glen or the sisters, but the Fall is referred to by the name of Nathan. However, as Hawker became more deeply immersed in the whole Arthurian mythos he gradually shifted the name of the Glen, firstly to St.Neot and then, by drawing on the popularity of a Devon saint from just over the border, to St.Nectan. The transformation was complete, and to the spot became attributed the romantic notion of a saint's cell and hermitage, for which there was absolutely no historical evidence. The story of the two sisters who lived at the spot also comes from Hawker's imagination, as does the idea of King Arthur's knights meeting there before going off on their quest for the holy grail. Hawker's poem, adapted, revised and reprinted, fed into the whole Arthurian fever generated by Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King', so much so that by 1858 Hawker began to grow distinctly uneasy about the growing momentum of it all and tried to distance himself from it. But by now it was too late, and the whole spurious Nectan mythos was taken up by others and so continues to this day. Kelvin Jones uncovers more fascinating threads in the trail along the way, and this book is a very valuable insight into how the legend has hugely grown.

Occult Cornwall: Magic, Witchcraft and the Supernatural in Cornwall

by Kelvin I. Jones (Oakmagic, 2001, £4.95)

This book brings together most of Kelvin Jones' earlier writings, articles and booklets on witchcraft in Cornwall, together with some new material, and presents them in a nicely produced booklet, with a colour photograph on the cover of a poppet from the Witchcraft Museum. Topics covered include Cornish Cunning Folk; The Cornish Witch: stereotype or reality?; and accounts of ghosts, cursing, the sacred hare, and a very revealing chapter about Crowley's associations with Cornwall. The book could have benefitted from a Contents list and an index, but even so, there is much valuable material therein, separating facts from fictions and myths.

The Stone Monuments of Cornwall by R.N. Worth (Oakmagic, 2001, £3.50)

A useful reprint from 1895, being an account of standing stones and stone circles as seen by a Victorian antiquarian, with diagrams and drawings.

Crosses and Churchway paths in the land's End Peninsula Vol 4; Paul & Sancreed

by Ian McNeil Cooke (Mên-an-Tol Studio, 2001, £14.95, £16.95 inc. postage)

This is as detailed and thorough as previous volumes in the series, and a must for all Celtic cross and Cornish antiquities enthusiasts. It also contains interesting snippets of folklore, such as the fact that the Gwavas Cross at Newlyn formerly stood on an old churchway path where fishermen would place a portion of their catch, as an offering to the sea-god Bucca. [CS]

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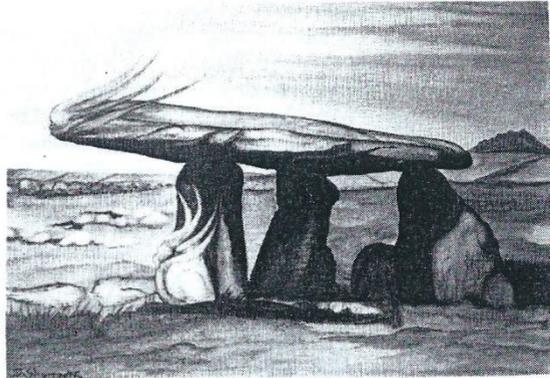
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The Pipers Tune

Denyse Dawn Shorrocks is a pagan artist whose work most magically expresses the spirits in ancient sites. She has received training in both Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca, from which she draws on for her artwork.



Her early training in art came from her father Frederick Treble, who was a formally trained artist “and a Druid Priest second to none”. Denyse says that from him came the most important training of her life, as “it was he who opened my eyes to the wonders and respect of all Nature”. Denyse says that she gains most of her inspiration from her magical homeland of Cornwall where she lives “with my beloved partner and furry friends”. All of her artwork can be obtained in cards and mounted prints, and she can be contacted at Denyse@stoneart.fsnet.co.uk, or at 1 Church Park Road, Crackington Haven, Cornwall EX23 0JT.

Christine Rusling is also a Pagan who is a photographer. She is drawn particularly to woods and trees, and in fact is the guardian of a piece of woodland near Wadebridge and all the creatures who inhabit it. She has a spiritual feel for trees and often sees faces and spirits there, which she attempts to photograph. “If I produce something that opens someone else’s eyes” she says, “that is a most fantastic experience”. Formerly a folk singer, she now does a little reflexology, but her energies are mainly spent on her woodland and on going to look at trees and photographing them. Christine’s cards are for sale from the address on the right.



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MEYN MAMVRO is available on annual subscription - 3 issues £6.00 (inc p&tp) from:-51 CARN BOSAVERN, ST.JUST, PENZANCE, CORNWALL TR19 7QX. MM49 due Sept 2002 will include stones & sites and new discoveries on Bodmin Moor.

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Weds May 1st - Obby Oss Day at

Padstow. Details: 01841-533449

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Sun July 7th **St.Eval Stone Circle****and other lost sites.** Howard Balmer

leads a journey to a stone circle [see

MM47], standing stones & an

unknown underground chamber. Meet

St.Eval Church 11am.

Sun Aug 4th **Trencrom Hill Lammas****picnic** Bring food & drink to share

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Sun Sept 1st **Around Kerris & Paul**

Rod Blunsdon leads a tour inc.

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exhibitionist carvings! Meet Paul

Church car park 11am.

*Bring packed lunches & walking shoes**to above events. For further details**contact Andy Norfolk (01209-831519)**or Cheryl Straffon (01736-787186)*Website address is at: [www.](http://www.cornwt.demon.co.uk/earth.htm)[cornwt.demon.co.uk/earth.htm](http://www.cornwt.demon.co.uk/earth.htm)**EARTH, HEALTH & MYSTIC****FAYRES** - St.Johns Hall, Penzance*Sat May 11th & Sat August 10th*

Tel: Karen 01736-330201

SUMMER CELEBRATIONS*Sun June 23rd* Midsummer Eve

Bonfires on hilltops lit by Old

Cornwall Societies throughout C'wall.

Sat June 29th Mazey Day, Penzance.

Serpent Dance & Penglaze 4.45pm.

PAGAN MOOTS**Penzance** - meets 2nd Tues each

month at 53 Morrab Rd. Tel: Andy

01209-831519 or Sarah 01736-787522

Camborne - meets 3rd Fri each

month above Xanadu, Treloarwan St.

Tel: Adrian & Ann 01209-214066

Truro/Falmouth area - meets 2nd

Thurs each month. Tel: Dianne &

Graham 01326-211002

St.Austell area - meets 3rd Thurs

each month. Tel: Teresa & Rory

01726-823005

North Cornwall - meets last Thurs

each month at Brendon Arms, Bude.

Tel: Lorraine 01288-359463

Pagan Moots co-ordinated by**Adrian Bryn-Evans: 01209-214066.****WALKS * with Ian Cooke***Sat Apr 13th* Zennor Quoit, Bodrifty

settlement, Bosporthenis hut, Treen

entrancegraves. Meet Zennor 10.30am

Sat June 15th Mên-an-Tol, Mên Scryfa

Nine Maidens, Bosiliack Barrow,

Lanyon Quoit, Chûn Quoit & Castle:

Meet Mên-an-Tol Studio 10.30am

*** with CAS/CAU (Andy Jones)***Sun June 23rd* Sites on St.Breock

Downs. Phone: 01726-824016

*** with Rory Te'Tigo**

Well walks on Sundays in August

Tel: 01736-787872 for details.