

ST.BREOCK DOWNS & ST.EVAL AREA ●
FORGOTTEN WELLS OF WEST PENWITH ●
URSULA BIRDHOOD ● LOST & FOUND ●

CONTENTS

Editorial p.1
 Cornish Earth Mysteries Group p.2
 Penwith Pagan Moot p.3
 Lost and Found p.4
 Readers Write... about Ursula Birdhood - Daniel Cohen p.5
 The Forgotten Wells of West Penwith:1 - Cheryl Traffon p.6
 50th Anniversary Issue Competition results p.12
 SPOTLIGHT ON ... St.Breock Downs & St.Eval area p.14
 Perspectives from St.Breock Downs Barrows p.17
 St.Breock Kist-Vean - Howard Balmer..... p.18
 Engollan Standing Stones - Howard Balmer p.19
 The Porthcothan Fogou - Howard Balmer p.22
 Fair Exchange p.24

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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**

At MM, we have had some wonderful feed-back from readers, congratulating us on having reached issue no.50. The appreciation and thanks was very moving and kind, and gives us great encouragement to go on with the magazine. Many people said that they liked it just as it was, and didn't want us to go glossy or change our style or format. However, the new colour section in the centre did meet with universal approval, with many people saying they would be very willing to pay a bit more to have it as a regular feature. So, we have included another colour photo this time (courtesy of Ian Cooke), one that to our knowledge has never been published before, showing the axe-head carvings at Boscawen-un central stone, and from the next issue we shall start a new feature of colour photos of some of Cornwall's most spectacular ancient sites. To help meet the costs for this, and other rising costs, the price of MM rises from this issue from £2 to £2.20. We hope that this relatively modest increase will not deter readers from continuing to buy MM and enjoy it.

The 50 question quiz that we set in the last issue also drew a good response, and we were delighted with all of you who had a go at answering as many questions as you could. Some of the questions proved to be capable of bearing more than one correct answer, so, allowing for that, we finished up with half a dozen virtually all-correct entries. The answers may be found in the centre pages of this issue, and at the time of going to press the finalists are busy answering a tie-breaker, so the eventual winner will be announced in the next issue.

We were also gratified by the response of several readers who offered to compile an index of all MMs from nos. 1-50 inclusive. The first to e-mail us was Raymond Cox, and he has done a magnificent job of compiling a most useful and comprehensive index, covering 24 pages of entries. This is available to readers in the following ways: it can be accessed on the MM website at www.cornwt.demon.co.uk, or is available direct from MM in either floppy disk [75p] or printed format [£2.00], all prices inclusive of p & p. Please make cheques/POs out to "Meyn Mamvro Publications". There is a wealth of information available in previous MMs, and this may be a good opportunity to remind readers that we are pleased to photocopy previous issues or specific articles as a special service. In fact someone has just ordered the whole back run of Issues nos. 1-50, so we are busy photocopying at the moment! Prices for back issues are £2/issue, or enquire for specific articles.



news page

The Autumn and Winter series of talks recommenced on Thursday Oct 24th 2002 at The Acorn with "Egyptian Magic" by Michael Kent, a local author, workshop facilitator and owner of Tamera shop in Penzance. Michael gave a very assured talk about the Neteru (the spiritual beings or gods and goddesses) of the Egyptian pantheon and how we might draw on their energies and ask for their help. He also demonstrated by means of kineaseology how members of the audience might be helped to unblock areas of fear and worry in their bodies through connecting with a particular Neter. Altogether, a most unusual and original presentation.

Thursday Nov 28th brought traveller Jane Pugh with her "Adventures on the Inca Trail". Her talk was accompanied by a video of the journey to Machu Picchu, the ancient Inca sacred site. The expedition was organised by a charity Group who used Peruvian guides to trek through the jungle and the old trail up to the mountain site. Although Jane was not an expert on the Inca site, nevertheless her talk was an insight into what had obviously been a challenging and fascinating odyssey on many levels.

The annual Yuletide walk up to Chûn Quoit was this year on December 22nd, the actual day of the Winter Solstice. However, that did not improve the chances of actually seeing the sunset alignment into the notch of Carn Kenidjack, that the Group have been waiting to see for the last 12 years! In fact, the weather was completely misty, but if anything that made it all the more mysterious and other-worldly. Despite the weather, a couple of dozen people made the walk, held hands and circled around the Quoit, chanting and hailing the Unconquered Sun. This was followed by the annual Celtic Storytelling at Age Concern in St. Just. There was a very good turn out this year with over 40 people and a dozen or so stories, poems and songs and dances.

The 2003 programme of talks included on Thurs Jan 30th Howard Balmer on "Discovering St. Eval & Carnac"; on Thurs Feb 27th Jan Machin on "Egyptian Goddesses"; on Thurs March 27th Craig Weatherhill on "Legends of Ancient Sites" and on Thurs April 24th Jude Currivan on "Cosmic Geomancy: the harmonics of consciousness". Full reports on this marvellous season of presentations will be in the next issue of MM. For full details of CEMG Summer Activities in 2003 see Noticeboard on the back page of this MM, and to keep up to date with forthcoming events visit the website at www.cornwt.demon.co.uk/earth

Penwith Pagan Moot



by Sarah Vivian

The Moot continued the seasonal round of festivals with a celebration of **Winter Solstice**, an indoor ritual which started in darkness and ended in a blaze of lights, with candles, side lights and fairy lights lit gradually through the ritual. The birth of the sun child was featured, hidden in a parcel of 40 layers which was passed around to unwrap and reveal a golden painted doll. For **Imbolc** the Moot went to Sancreed House, and the ritual included a walk up to the well for a blessing, and the transformation of the Crone of Winter to the Maiden of Spring. We were blessed with beautiful weather, the best day of the year so far, a day when Spring was clearly on her way. **Spring Equinox, Beltane & Summer Solstice** rituals will be reported next issue.

The rituals are open to all, everyone welcome, as are the monthly Moots which take place on the second Tuesday of each month at Chy Gwella, 53 Morrab Road, Penzance at 7.15pm. There are news, events, organising for rituals, and we have a special topic for each session - recent topics have included pagan poetry, Yule customs & menaings, and the elements of air & water. For further details please contact either of the local organisers:-

Sarah Vivian, 24 Queen St, St. Just, Penwith TR19 7JW.

Tel: 01736-787522

Andy Norfolk, The Cottage, Crowan, Praze, Camborne TR14 9NB

01209-831519

SACRED SITES NEWS

GŪN RITH TAKES A TUMBLE

Gŭn Rith menhir, which stood in the corner hedge a field away from the Merry Maidens stone circle and was visible from it, has recently fallen down. It appears to be caused by the very wet winter weather that loosened the soil around the base. Ann Preston-Jones of CAU told MM that she plans to have it put

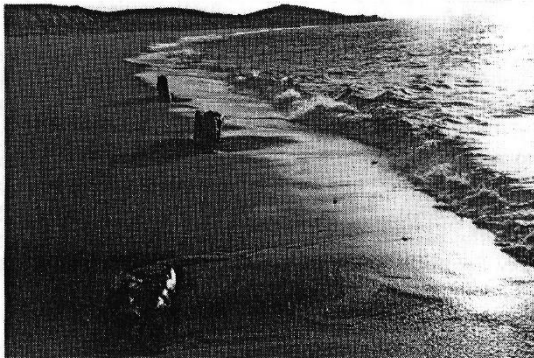


back in the same place. Because of the small amount of the stone that was under the ground, it may be necessary to put it in a concrete base that would be buried to ensure its future stability. Some of the encroaching woodland hedge may also be cut back.

LOST & FOUND

ST.MARTIN'S STONE ROW LOST AGAIN

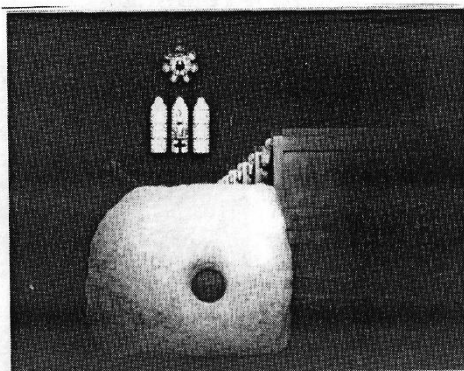
The Bronze Age stone row on the beach at St.Martins on the Isles of Scilly, which emerged from the sea in the mid 1990s, has disappeared again! The row on Higher Town beach, which consists of three stones, appeared to point in a NE direction to Chapel Downs, which has a stone figurine there.



The row [pictured above in 1998] was uncovered by the shifting sands and tides, and was the only known example of a stone row on the Scillies. However, a recent visit to the islands in September 2002 revealed that the row has now been covered by the sands again, with only the top of one of the stones visible, buried in the sand. It is a stark reminder that the changing patterns of sea and sands are as likely to bury things in the Scillies as they are to uncover them.

GRADE CHURCH HOLED STONE DESTROYED

Reader Robin Ellis reports that the mysterious holed stone [right] in Grade Church down the Lizard has been broken, with only the 'decapitated' head remaining near the font. Whether this was an accident or deliberate is not known, but the stone was known to have some strange powers.



It may have originally been the central focus at the churchyard, which was a probable pagan site before it was Christianised, and at some subsequent time was moved inside the church and hidden away in a corner. Now, tragically it has been finally destroyed.

READERS WRITE..... about **URSULA BIRDHOOD - WHO IS SHE?**

"In your recent article about Padstow and the May Song, you referred to Aunt Ursula Birdhood. This surprised me, as I had always thought the name was Aunt Ursula Birdwood. You convinced me (in a private letter) that Birdhood is correct. That left me wondering why I had got it wrong all these years, and I have been looking into this.

The first time I encountered the words of the song was over forty years ago, on a record called *The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music: England*, edited by Alan Lomax (from the BBC archives). This record consisted of fragments of songs, with slightly longer material given in the covering texts. That particular verse of the May Song was not on the LP, but the accompanying text referred to Aunt Ursula Birdwood, and evidently that first encounter had fixed that wording in my mind. I checked what other LPs I had which contained the song as sung in Padstow. I found that it occurred in *Songs of Ceremony* in the Topic/Caedmon Folk Songs of Britain series. That version may have been a fuller version of the one on the other record, as both were collected by Alan Lomax and Peter Kennedy. However, the covering text here refers to Ursula Birdhood (though the line was given as "And Ursula Birdhood ..." rather than "Aunt Ursula ..."). I've listened to this record a good few times recently, and I can't say that I am clear as to what is actually being sung at that point. I decided to do a bit of searching on the Internet. I found that sites giving the text of Steel Eye Span's songs gave both Birdhood and Birdwood (which shows the problems of Internet research). Other references gave both forms, though Birdhood seemed the commonest. The most interesting reference, however, was not to the May Song itself. In the Devon Library's Local Studies collection (www.devon.gov.uk/library/locstudy/dcrs.html) the Devon and Cornwall Record Society family information files list records for the Birdwood family, but nothing for Birdhood, and the record of Ancient West Country families (arms-bearing) also lists Birdwood only.

This makes me wonder if there is a class distinction between the two names, with Birdwood being upper-class. Alternatively, could it be a distinction between Devon names and Cornwall ones. But there turns out to be a third possibility. In a discussion with folk singers who know Padstow (and presumably, as singers, would be listening carefully), most people felt that the actual word sung was neither Birdhood nor Birdwood. Perhaps Birdhood was the meaning of what was sung, but the actual word seems to be Bird'ood. That reminded me of the passage in *The Sword in the Stone* (I don't know if anyone suggested it earlier) about Robin Hood. White suggested there that the name was originally Robin Wood (as a woodland spirit) which became elided into Robin 'Ood and then expanded again into Robin Hood."

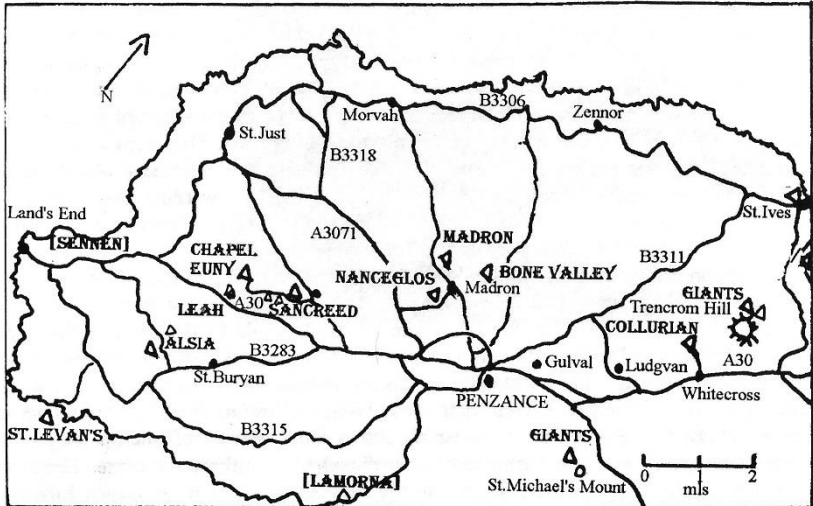
Daniel Cohen [via e-mail]

Editor's Note: In "Padstow's Obby Oss and May Day Festivities" (1971) Donald R. Rawe says that the Birdhoods were a well-known Cornish family of standing during several centuries. However there are no Birdhoods currently in the Cornwall telephone directory, so evidently at some point the family name died out.

THE FORGOTTEN WELLS OF WEST PENWITH

Part 1 - South [Penzance to Land's End]

by Cheryl Traffon



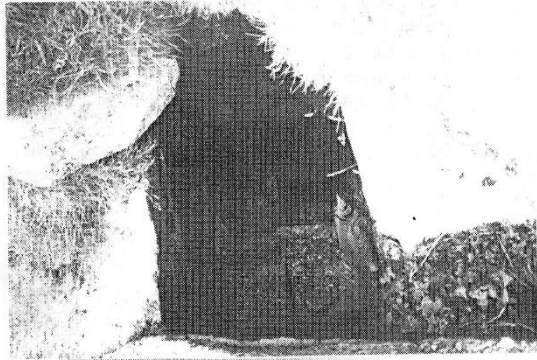
The recent re-discovery of 2 holy wells in West Penwith [see MM45 p.6] has prompted this journey to find and reveal some of the other obscure holy wells in the peninsula. West Penwith is home to several of the most famous and widely-featured wells in Cornwall, places like Sancreed, Madron, Chapel Euny and Alsia. But the very fame of these has tended to overshadow some other holy wells, once loved and much visited in their time, but now lost, overgrown or forgotten. And yet most of them can still be discovered and perhaps reclaimed again with a little diligence and patience.

Of course there are many wells and springs still extant in West Penwith. Once every farmstead or hamlet would have had its own well. Some of these may once have been 'holy' wells; that is, dedicated to a particular saint and/or in close proximity to a church, with perhaps a reputation for particularly efficacious healing. Alas for most of these, any such associations were either never recorded or have been lost. So we are left with a handful of wells in West Penwith that by good fortune have been recorded, and it is these that we look at in this article.



Penzance is the gateway to West Penwith, and is surrounded by several little-known wells. On St. Michael's Mount there is the **Giant's Well** (SW515 298), the giants being Cormoran and his wife Cormelian, who were supposed to inhabit the Mount. Their names may mean "blackberry giant" and "clover giantess" and may hint at the pre-Christian nature of the site. Although now capped with a locked circular cover, the well was obviously the principal source of water for the Mount, which was a sacred site with associations with St. Keyne who made a pilgrimage there in 490 CE.

Another **Giant's Well** can be found on the NW side of Trencrom Hill (SW 520 363), due north from St. Michael's Mount. The giant here was called Trecrobben, and both giants would sling a hammer to each other from their own hilltops, perhaps the memory of a ley line between the two holy hilltop sites.

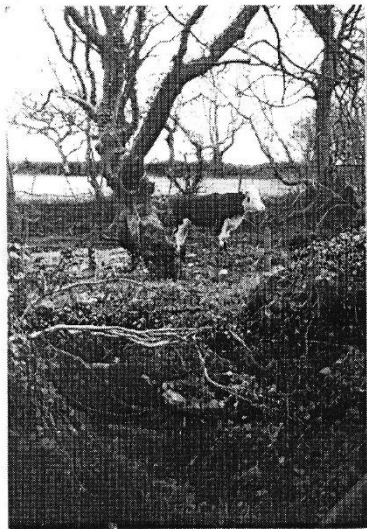


The well is reached by a track leading down between the most north-westerly outcrop of rocks on top of the hill. It runs for about 50 yds and ends beside the well which is set back inside the rocks themselves. It is truly a very hidden place, unknown to most visitors to the top of the Hill, and it is especially beautiful at the Spring and Autumn sunsets which it faces. There is also another well on the Hill, a deep shaft under a padlocked iron plate on the lower east slope of the Hill.

To the east of Penzance is the village of Gulval, and here to the south of the church was the holy well of St. Welvela (SW486 317) now destroyed. This was a famed well for its oracular powers, the number of bubbles arising from its waters indicating if someone were dead or alive. The whereabouts of cattle and lost goods could also be traced by this method. The well of Ludgvan to the north of Penzance (SW503 331), now also destroyed, also had great powers: in this case, anyone baptised here would never hang. Ludgvan was named after St. Ludewon, the same saint as Dwynwen, the Welsh patron saint of lovers, who may be an avatar of the Goddess Bridget/Bride.

The remains of **Collurian Well** (SW523 347) also lie to the north of Penzance in Ludgvan parish, situated in a tree-hung dell. To get there, go on the A30 to Whitecross, between Penzance and Hayle. At the cross, take the lane going north to Collurian Farm. Just before the farm entrance on the left of the lane, there is a triangle of grass and a footpath, and the well lies in a boggy hollow to the north of this footpath.

Dr. Borlase tested the water in the well and found it to be unusually rich in iron, sulphur and naphtha. The other peculiarity was that it was very warm, although ordinary water running nearby was very cold, and he concluded that it derived its heat from a bed of iron vitriol and pyrites through which it passes. The well was considered to be most powerful for the cure of eye diseases, and hundreds came from afar to cure weak sight. The name 'Collurian' could in fact derive from the Greek word 'kollurion' meaning 'eye-salve'. Interestingly, in one version of Dwynwen/Ludewon's legend, angels put heavenly drops on her eyes. Could it be that this legend helped to give rise to the fame of this well as a cure for weak sight?

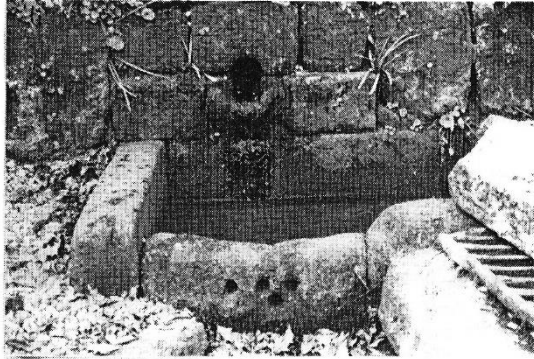


To add to this idea, there was formerly another holy well not very far away at Castle Horneck (SW463 302) which also was famed as a cure for bad eyes. Both Collurian and Castle Horneck were chalybeate springs, that is, natural mineral springs in which iron predominates, generally combined with carbonic acid or sulphuric acid, so there may be some substance to the wells' repute of curative properties. Quiller Couch wrote about Castle Horneck well in 1894, but it has since been destroyed by some modern houses. Water still runs through the gardens, and the site may be reached by a turning off the A30 in Penzance opposite the Pirates Inn.

If one continues up this road and crosses the Penzance distributor road, there is a path that leads up to Rosehill Farm where there is a little well hidden in a copse (SW456 305). This may have been the well for the farmstead, or for the Iron Age settlement of Lesingey Round above. Nothing is recorded about it, but it is a real hidden gem of a well.

We are now in the parish of Madron, to the north-west of Penzance. Here there were several wells. One in **Bone Valley** (SW456 333) may be found on the east side of the minor road that leads from Heamoor towards Newmill, a few hundred yards north of Bosoljack Farm. It is now a spring within a copse and could do with some clearing away of the undergrowth that chokes it. There was formerly a well-structure but this has now gone, although there is some ruined masonry lying about in the undergrowth. Quiller Couch writing in 1894 commented that it is (now) "not used for purposes of divination" though the implication is that it once was.

Nearby is **Nanceglos well**(SW452 313) which consists of a large stone trough and shute in a recess in the wall near entrance to Trengwainton Gardens. This was said to be a wishing well with excellent water. Nanceglos means "church valley" and Landithy Farm above is the Lan of St.Itthey, the putative predecessor of Madron, so it may originally have been St.Itthey's well.



Both Bone Valley and Nanceglos wells may have owed their reputation to their proximity to what is perhaps one of the most famous wells in all of Cornwall, that of **Madron Well** itself. Madron Baptistry (or well-chapel) is of course very popular and well-visited, but the original well, which lies in very boggy ground about ½ mile from the Baptistry has until recently been quite inaccessible. However, work by some members of the Earth Mysteries Group and the Pagan Moot in 1999 to divert the water courses there resulted in access being possible with care. There is now a stone surround marking the location of the well, and, interestingly, the team also uncovered a green mound nearby that may mark the location of the lost St.Maddern's Bed, on which pilgrims of old used to sleep as part of the cure at the well. This was first recorded in 1640 when John Trelille went there to cure a badly bruised or broken backbone.

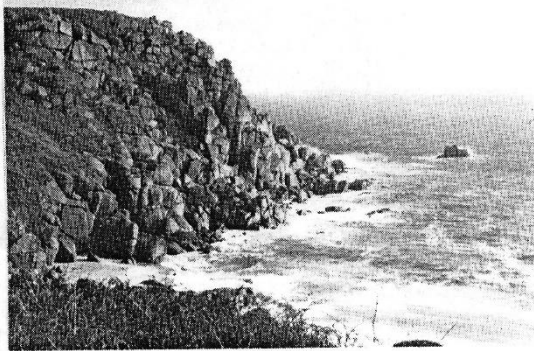


*Madron Well
[Andy Norfolk]*

To the south of Madron near the farm of Boswednan there was formerly a well at **Venton Jean** (SW435 312), now marked by a spring to the south of the A3071 road, 100 yds to the NW. The name comes from the Cornish 'Fenten Yeyn' meaning 'cold spring', and the site was once named as Beggar Boys for reasons that are now lost in the mists of time. Moving south-westwards we come to the famous cove of **Lamorna**. Many come to visit the Cove and the valley during the summer but very few of those know that in the private woods on the east side of the stream lies a well with a stone surround and clear water. Nothing is recorded of this well, and it seems to be a hidden secret known only to the few locals who walk through these woods. Another unknown well is one that lies close to the most famous **Alsia Well** (SW393 251). This other one, which has a stone surround, is on the same stream as its more famous sister, that rises at Crows-an-Wra and eventually issues into the sea at Penberth Cove. This second well lies on private land near to Alsia Farm on the opposite side of the road from Alsia Mill, and is claimed by some locals to be the "real" Alsia well. Interestingly, it lies near what may originally have been a path running from Alsia Mill to St.Buryan Churchtown, and both wells may have been dedicated to St.Buryana.

North of St.Buryan to the north of the A30 there are 3 largely unknown 'holy' wells. At SW407 276 is **Leah Well** where water flows through a stone-lined underground chamber reached by a few steps. There is no known saint's attribution or healing legend, though the local resident of the nearby farmhouse who has lived there all his life says that the water was much drunk in the past and thought to be health-giving. About ½ml to the NE (reached by a lane from the A30 to a Water Works) lies the well of **Goldherring** (SW412 282), now concreted around and capped with an iron cover. It lies near to a wind pump, a few yards E of an enclosed and overgrown Courtyard House settlement. About another ½ml NE is **Anjarden Well** (SW418 287), a natural spring with just a few stones of a rough stone structure remaining.

Further west towards Lands End we come to **St.Levan's Well** (SW381 219) in its dramatic position above the cliffs leading to Portchapel Beach. Recently, St.Levan's hermit cell has been uncovered beside the coastal path below the well. Together with the nearby church with its split boulder and legends, this is a special holy place.



View of the coast from St.Levan's well

Finally, we arrive at the furthest westerly point of Land's End, and just around the corner lies Sennen Cove, which formerly had a Chapel and a holy well dedicated to St. Idne. An article in MM34 (p.4-5) looked at the history of the site and the possible location of this well.



View of Sennen Cove from possible location of holy well

It may possibly have been at SW3552 2632 near the car park, or perhaps in Maria's Lane at Sarah's Well. Here at any rate legend has it that a "holy woman whose name has not been preserved to us brought home a west wind by emptying the holy well against the hill, and sweeping the church from the door to the altar". A reminder indeed that many of these lost holy wells were originally places of pagan magic and sanctuary, and were guarded over by protectresses who may have been the old white witches of West Penwith.

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50TH BUMPER BUNDLE COMPETITION (MM50)

ANSWERS:

- Q1** Time Team have been to Boleigh fogou as well as Caervallack & Gear.
- Q2** The 3 cromlechs that lie on lower ground are West Lanyon, Bosporthenis & Grumbla. [Lanyon also accepted].
- Q3** True?. The Mên-an-Tol holed stone was probably originally at right angles.
- Q4** The Nine Maidens stone circle at Boskednan no longer has 19 stones standing. [Boscawen-ûn also accepted, because it has 20 stones (19 + a central stone)]
- Q5** The two fogous are Pendeen & Boscaswell, whose northern ends face NW and the Midsummer solstice sunset.
- Q6** (a) The ceremony of casting flowers into a fire, spoken in Cornish occurs at the OCS Midsummer Bonfires. (b) The ceremony of the offering of the fruits of the earth by the Lady of Cornwall occurs at the Gorseth.
- Q7** (a) A white lady appears at Pendeen Fogou (b) a coven of witches & the devil were seen in Boleigh fogou.
- Q8** "Venton Bebibell" means (b) well of the little people
- Q9** A milpreve is (c) a kind of bead or stone ring sometimes worn by pellers.
- Q10** (a) Holywell at Newquay is in a sea cave (b) St.Morwenna's Well at Morwenstow is halfway down a sea cliff. [St.Levan's Well at Porthchapel also accepted].
- Q11** Brass pins were traditionally placed on top of the Mên-an-Tol holed stone.
- Q12** The 'mock' or 'block' was the Yule log and you would see it at Christmas.
- Q13** There were (a) 2 or 3 stone circles at Tregeseal & (b) 3 or 4 at The Hurlers.
- Q14** Chapel Downs Well is more popularly known as Sancreed Well.
- Q15** A ley line has been defined as any or all of alternatives (a) (b) & (c).
- Q16** The remains of stone circles have been discovered at (a) the Mên-an-Tol & (c) St.Eval Churchyard. They have not, as yet, been discovered at (b) St.Michael's Mount.
- Q17** On the Isles of Scilly you may find (a) The Old Man of Gugh (standing stone) (b) the stone head on St.Martin's & (c) a pagan altar in Tresco Gardens [or Nor-Nour].
- Q18** You can find (a) a rock-carved labyrinth in Rocky Valley near Tintagel (b) a stone pebble labyrinth on St.Agnes (Scillies) & (c) a labyrinth-carved stone in The Witchcraft Museum in Boscastle [the church font at Lewannack also accepted]
- Q19** None. William Borlase wrote the earliest book about ancient sites of Cornwall.
- Q20** Pee Tregear [or Joan] put a magic ointment on her eyes and was pixie-led.
- Q21** Duloe is the smallest stone circle in Cornwall and it has 8 stones.
- Q22** It is the carving on the entrance stone to Boleigh fogou.
- Q23** Zennor & Sperris cromlechs lie only 400 yards apart.
- Q24** A feeper is a whistle made out of a twig and you would see it on May Day.
- Q25** The axe head carvings may be seen at the centre stone of Boscawen-ûn circle on Midsummer solstice sunrise. [see picture on next page]
- Q26** Lower Boscaswell holy well was famed for the collection of leeches.
- Q27** The NE Piper is the tallest extant standing stone in Cornwall at 15ft.
- Q28** St.Michael's Mount was known as "Carreg Luz en Kuz".
- Q29** All the witches met at Trewa near Zennor on Midsummer Eve.

Q30 “Porthmeor Nine Maidens” or “Zennor Cirque” is better known as Treen Common circle.

Q31 At Zennor Church you may find a mermaid carving on a bench end identified as ‘Aphrodite’ on a notice.

Q32 You would look for Chapel Idne in Sennen Cove car park (but you wouldn’t find anything left there!).

Q33 The Crying of the Neck takes place at the end of harvest time.

Q34 The Wiches Rock is at Zennor & The Witch’s Cross at Crows-an-Wra.

Q35 The stone on St.Breock Downs has been known by those various names

Q36 (a) The so-called “Arthur Stone” was discovered at Tintagel Castle (b) the sword and the mirror were discovered in a grave on Bryher (c) three Bronze Age gold bracelets were discovered at Rosemorran Farm.

Q37 John Trelille bathed in the waters of Madron Well.

Q38 Morgawr was a Cornish sea-serpent seen in Falmouth Bay in 1989.

Q39 The Michael & Mary Lines meet at Carn les Boel, St.Michael’s Mount, Resugga Castle, Lostwithiel Church and the Hurlers stone circle.

Q40 (a) Boscawen-ûn has one quartz stone (b) Duloe circle has all quartz stones (c) the Hurlers central circle has a floor of crushed quartz pieces buried underneath.

Q41 (a) King Arthur’s Castle is at Tintagel [Castle Killibury accepted] (b) King Arthur’s Hall is on Bodmin Moor (c) King Arthur’s Tomb is a stone at Slaughterbridge.

Q42 The giants (a) Cormoran & Cormelian live on St.Michael’s Mount (b) Bolster lives at St.Agnes (c) Trecrobben lives on Trencrom Hill.

Q43 (a) Traces of Sillina found on Nor-Nour (Scillies) (b) Traces of Bran can be found at Caer Bran hilltop fort, Mên Scryfa standing stone or Brane chambered tomb.

Q44 The Tolvan Stone and Mên Frith are both holed stones, the former near Gweek and the latter near the Merry Maidens.

Q45 The Eathorne menhir was ripped out by the farmer Philip Clemoes because he feared “pagan practices”. It was subsequently restored (not in the right place) in 1993.

Q46 The stone is in St.Levan Churchyard. Prophecy made by St.Levan or Merlin.

Q47 All the three stones have inscriptions on them.

Q48 (a) Spriggans were a goblin race who guarded treasure (b) Knockers were a supernatural race who occupied the mines (c) Bucca was a sea-spirit at Newlyn.

Q49 Figgy Dowdy was the Harvest Goddess who had a well on Carnmarth Hill.

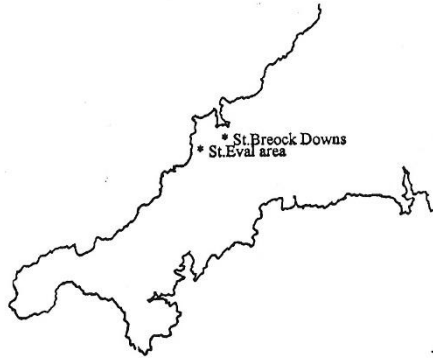
Q50 The patron saint of Cornwall is St.Piran, his Saint’s Day is March 5th and his well is at Perranaworthal or Perranzabuloe (Perranwell).



Boscawen-ûn carved axe-heads

**FOCUS
ON ...**

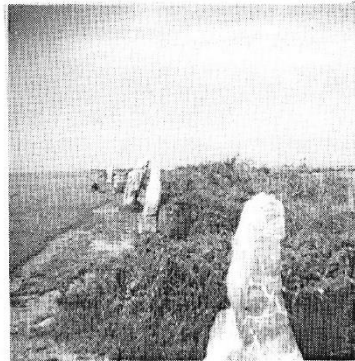
**ST. BREOCK
DOWNS & ST.
EVAL AREA**



by Cheryl Traffon

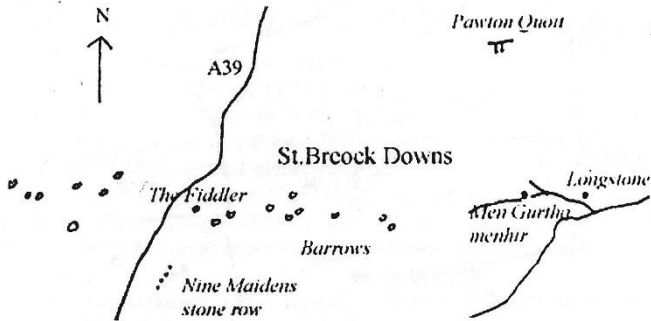
The St. Breock Downs & St. Eval area of Cornwall is often a neglected part compared with Bodmin Moor and West Penwith, and yet it contains a wealth of similar ancient sites and sacred/ritual places to those better known areas.

To begin with, there is Cornwall's largest **STONE ROW The Nine Maidens** (SW9363 6745), consisting of 6 standing and 3 fallen stones running in a NNE direction, which Alexander Thom suggested pointed to the rising of the star Deneb in 2000 BCE. The Cornish Earth Mysteries Group dowsed this site in August 1995, and several people, sometimes working blind and independent of each other, determined that there were formerly 13 stones in this now 9 stone row [see MM28 p.2], stretching some 900 yards in a SSW-NNE direction.



Although there are quite a few stone rows on Bodmin Moor most are of small ground-level stones, and with the possible exception of Calvannack Tor, none are the height of the Nine Maidens row where the stones stand about 5ft above ground. In West Penwith there are no stone rows, except for the possible row at Zennor, where the stones are also quite high.

However, the extant row at St. Breock Downs may not originally have been only a single row. A reference by John Norden in 1728 mentions 'The Sisters', nine great stones on St. Breock Downs around SW97.68, [see MM26 p.3] and his drawing appears to show something that could possibly be a double stone row. Interestingly, when the CEMG dowsed the site in August 1995, a number of people did find the exact location of a second row running parallel to the existing one, about 25ft to the west.



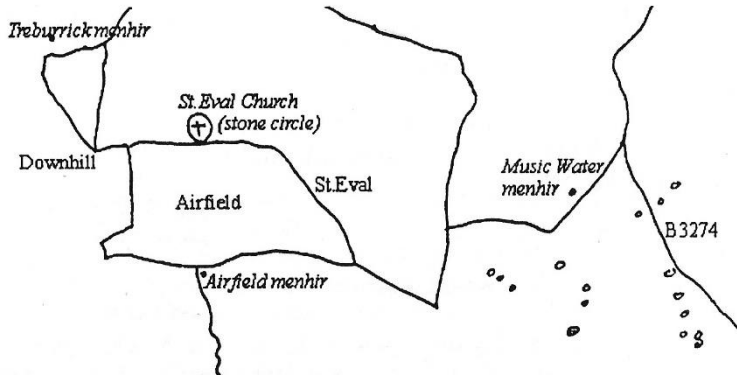
There is also the possibility that the stone row(s) may have been part of a much larger complex. A MM reader, Terry Cox, reported that his wife had a psychic vision at this site, in which she saw 2 small rings of stones and a small stone row [see MM21 p.16]. Interestingly, according to Howard Balmer, some of the older local people still refer to the Nine Maidens stone row as a “stone circle”. Is this simply because they are confusing the name “Nine Maidens” with stone circles of that name in other parts of Cornwall, or could it be an old folk memory of circles that were once at this site?

There are certainly a marked absence of **STONE CIRCLES** which makes it different from Bodmin Moor and West Penwith. But there may originally have been circles that are now lost. It is only quite recently that local researcher Howard Balmer has (re)discovered the remains of a stone circle in nearby **St. Eval Churchyard** at SW8718 6919 [see MM47 p.6-7]. Some years ago Eddie Pryn, the self-styled Druid of St. Merryn, claimed that a field behind his neo-megalithic complex at Engollan Farm (SW8652 6955) contained the remains of a quartzite stone circle. The CAU had a look at the site but said that the stones were earth-fast and a natural deposit.



Howard Balmer with one of the stones of the stone circle at St. Eval Churchyard.

There are other similar fields in the area, including one on St. Breock Downs, where the quartzite stones gleam white and shining as they reflect the sun, and it is not inconceivable that such places may have been the source for many of the quartzite standing stones that are in the area.



These **STANDING STONES** include the ones on St. Breock Downs: the 10ft **Mên Gurtha**, which weighs over 16 tons (SW9678 6331); the **Longstone** (sw9732 6825); and the stump of the former 7½ft menhir called variously **The Fiddler**, **the Old Man**, or **The Magi** (SW9394 6820), to which the Nine Maidens stone row points. To the west of the Downs there are also other standing stones in the low-lying plain between the Downs and the sea, such as the beautiful **Music Water** (SW9056 6870), the **St. Eval Airfield** stone (SW8715 6802), and other possible standing stones in the same area discovered by Howard Balmer, such as the **Treburrick menhir** (SW8588 7011) and the ones listed in the article on p.19-21 of this MM. These quartzite standing stones must have seemed ritually significant to the Bronze Age peoples who placed them there.

Also, making the area similar to Bodmin Moor (at Caradon Hill and elsewhere) there are a line of over 50 **BARROWS**, running along the ridgeway at the top of the Downs between Hustyn Down to the east and Denzell Down to the west. Some of these may have been deliberately placed to align to the holy hilltops of Rough Tor and Brown Willy on Bodmin Moor (see article on p.17 of this MM). Alternatively, or in addition, they may have been designed as calendrical markers, when viewed from a site on the southern flanks of the hill near the Nine Maidens stone row. At any rate, such a large barrow cemetery marks the area out as being a significant ceremonial or ritual site. Archaeologist Andy Jones has suggested that some of the quartzite stones found at the barrows may have been carried there and given as a ritual offering to the spirits of the dead at the site. There may also have been other kinds of ritual activities: a barrow on St. Eval Hill excavated by Copeland Borlase revealed layers of different kinds and colours of soil, and Andy Jones has speculated that perhaps these different colours of earth had ritual significance, and were carried to the barrow and renewed there annually in a ceremony to honour the dead and the site.

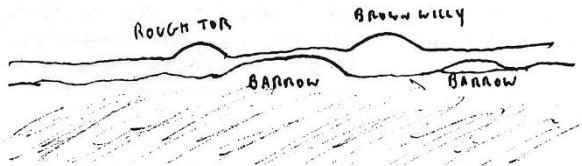
So, this apparently unpromising area of St. Breock Downs & St. Eval turns out to be a very rich area of sites and significances. The following pages now go into some of these sites and significances in more detail.

PERSPECTIVES FROM ST.BREOCK BARROWS

It seems to be a feature of some upland barrow sites in Cornwall that pairs of tumuli were deliberately constructed to “mirror” images of the two holy hilltops on Bodmin Moor: Rough Tor and Brown Willy. In addition, the twin tumuli will often ‘frame’ the view of Rough Tor and Brown Willy when viewed from a significant spot nearby. This can be seen in several places on Bodmin Moor, for example, at the two eastern cairns on Brown Gelly, and on Carburrow Tor. To the Bronze Age peoples these two hilltops were probably thought of as the places of the Gods or Goddesses, and they constructed their tumuli to mirror these hills and so to honour these sacred places.

The same phenomenon can be viewed on St.Breock Downs. Although the two hilltops of Rough Tor and Brown Willy are further away, nevertheless, as Peter Herring from CAU has noted, a set of two tumuli in the barrow cemetery along the ridge top of the Downs (at SW95555 6810) perform the same function

There is a spot, about 300 metres away from the barrows to the SW as the ridge of land rises, where an observer can see the two tumuli both mirror and frame the tops of the two holy hilltops [see right].



However, when we visited the site with the CAS/CAU in June 2002, we were puzzled that the spot where this phenomenon is visible was not marked by any kind of barrow, tumulus or ridge, as might be expected. As I moved around the area, looking for the best view of the hills, I eventually found the remains of a ploughed-out barrow a little further up the slope. When I stood at this point (and only at this point), the intentions of the Bronze Age builders became immediately obvious.

There was a beautiful view of the two distant hilltops (of Rough Tor & Brown Willy) between which lay the mound of the western tumulus of the two on St.Breock Downs, a clever trick of perspective. [right]



This dramatic and impressive sight shows us that the Bronze Age peoples still have many exciting things to show us about their sacred landscape! [CS]

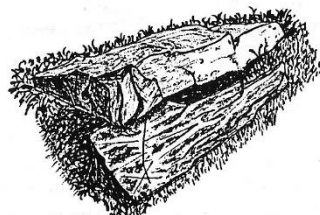
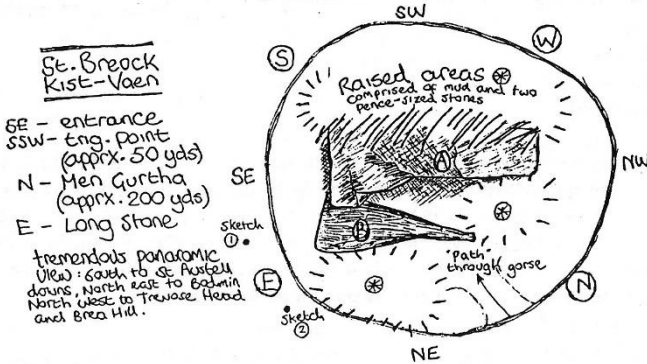
ST.BREOCK KIST-VEAN

by Howard Balmer

On St.Breock Downs, close to the Mên Gurtha standing stone, was recorded a "kist-vean" or small entrance grave by William Copeland Borlase in 1872. John Barnatt (1982) and Robin Payne (1999) both recorded it as no longer existing, but it has recently been re-discovered by MM reader Howard Balmer. He reports as follows:-

"W.C.Borlase describes it as being 150yds SW of Mên Gurtha, but it is actually virtually due south of the standing stone. This may explain why nobody has been able to find it! It also re-opens the possibility that Mên Gurtha was re-erected in a different position in 1945 - however, I doubt that. The task of re-erecting such a heavy stone, let alone moving it a few hundred yards for no apparent reason, would be plenty hard enough. The entrance of the kist grave faces towards a possible mid-winter sunrise, and another longstone is visible virtually due east. Raised areas surround the stones and these are full of small pieces of spar.

Stone A [on plan below] is 9½ft x 5ft and between 6in-1ft thick. The north-east facing side has a noticeable spar 'glaze'. Stone B is over 7ft long, triangular in section and up to 3ft high. The south-east face is also covered with a thin glaze of spar, which makes it appear white. From the north-east, you see it as dark with white bolts of spar - very similar to Mên Gurtha. The view from the top is superb and on a clear day is a fine reward for the rather prickly approach. I particularly like this spot which could have been the first ritual site on the Downs, and yet it is strangely neglected."



Sketch from Viewpoints
 (1) Above
 (2) Right

ENGOLLAN STANDING STONES

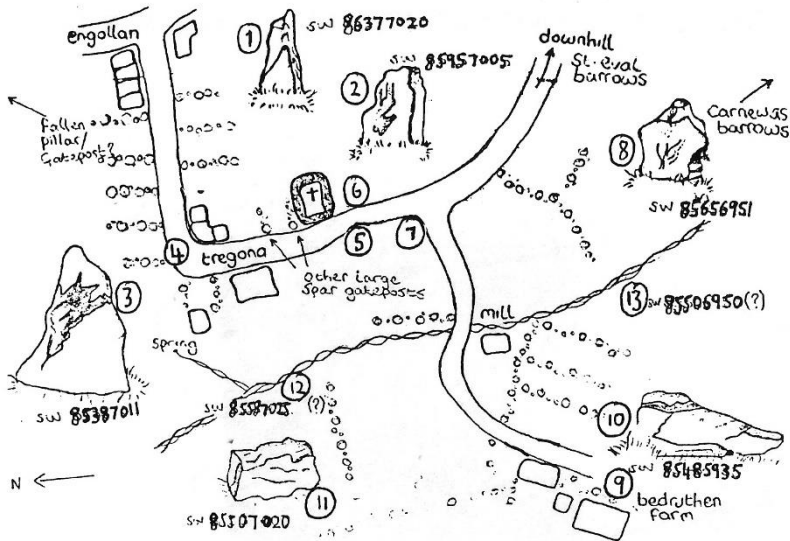
by Howard Balmer



The Treburrick Menhir (stone no.3) discovered by Howard in 1995

The identification of standing stones in a place like Engollan, near St.Eval, is notoriously difficult. In a field between the Candle Factory and St.Eval Church (where the remains of a stone circle has been identified), lies a mass of spar boulders, some of them quite massive. Wandering amongst the stones feels like wandering through the “Mother’s Jam” at Avebury (the source of Avebury’s megaliths). The coast road to Mawgan Porth has a couple of fields with very bouldery walls next to it, and the slopes of Bear Downs are studded in places with spar outcrops. So, distinguishing between what is natural and what is man-made can take some time. Secondly, the farmers of Engollan took to using huge megalithic gate-posts for virtually every gate! Whether these stones, as high as six feet and of considerable mass, were erected as standing stones and since moved, or re-used in situ, is a tantalising prospect. They could just as easily be stone-age gateposts. Perhaps they are a s old as the megaliths, and were erected using the same techniques. Some of these ‘gateposts’ would weigh over 5 tons.

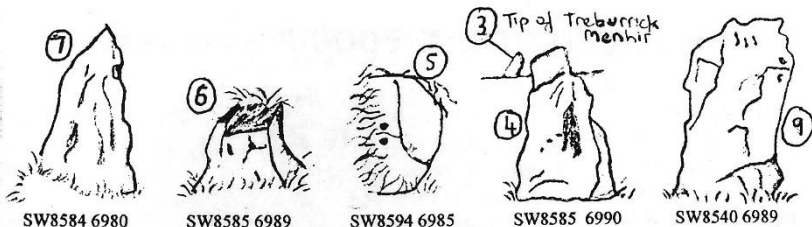
Once naturally occurring spar and stones standing as part of field boundaries are discounted, there remains a number of free standing stones in fields. Packing stones are visible, as animals have worn hollows around them over the years. These stones have been put there by humans; and the final distinction is between stones put in the field for animals to use as rubbing posts, and those erected as symbols of Neolithic or Bronze-Age religion. The surrounding area is rich in barrows, standing stones and occupation sites. The stones I have finally chosen to include are those that are most likely to be ‘proper’ standing stones alongside a few possibilities.



If you walk from Engollan towards Tregona, the first stone (No.1 above) lies behind the houses on your right. It is $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft high and of wide but thin 'playing-card' type shape. The face of the stone looks across several fields towards the Treburrick Menhir (stone no.3). Continuing towards Tregona, stone no.2 is on your right (in the field with a footpath to Treburrick). This 3ft little pillar is in the next field to the 7ft Treburrick Menhir (stone no.3). Treburrick Menhir is a bulky, yet elegant stone that is most easily identified as a longstone. In the field to the west of this stone is a very pretty spring.

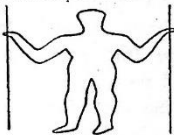
At Tregona the road bears sharp left and starts climbing past the old Methodist Church towards the strangely named Downhill. Stones nos. 4-7 are gateposts along a short section of this road as it leaves the village. There are several other large stones along this section, but these are the most striking. I personally think these stones are the least likely to be 'proper' longstones, but they do flank an ancient route from Treburrick Menhir towards the barrows at Carnewas, and they are extremely bulky.

Continuing up towards Downhill and not visible from the road, another $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft stone with packing stones around it is off to the right (stone no.8). However, before getting that far, a road leads rightwards to Bedruthen Farm and onto the coastroad. Around Bedruthen Farm are several more possible longstones. Stone no.9 is in a wall just to the front and left of the farm and is nearly 6ft high. Stone no.10 is behind the farm and looks like a small 3ft boulder as it is approached. However, from the other side it looks like a toppled 6ft pillar. Stone no.11 is in the next field north near to another fine gatepost, and very closely resembling the stump of The Magi stone on St. Breock Downs.



Finally, stones 12 & 13 have disappeared! Stone 12 was in the next field north again from stone no.11, and one day I hope to locate what is apparently a 3-4ft free standing pillar in amongst a spreading tangle of blackthorn, brambles and gorse. Stone 13 originally stood on the valleyside opposite stone no.8, and was as tall and shapely as the Treburrick Menhir. It was leaning badly, and a pit was dug into which the stone was pushed by a tractor. the pit was filled in and the stone has vanished. While this disastrous loss of a fine stone is sadly recent, the farmer of the land was simply ignorant of its significance. The very same farmer is now quite proud of his stones and has helped me discover and identify several of them.

There is a unique opportunity to visit the stones with Howard himself. CEMG have arranged for a special field trip on Sunday July 6th 2003. Meet at St.Eval Church at 11am, and bring a packed lunch.



THE SOCIETY OF LEY HUNTERS

The Society exists as a forum for all who are interested in ley lines.
The Society has not prepared a single formal definition of a ley, but recognises a variety of different opinions.

The Society of Ley Hunters welcomes co-operation with other organisations and seeks to operate as a 'broad church' to consider all opinions.

The Society has undertaken cataloguing, indexing and surveys of ley data, and seeks to build a library of ley information.

Society members receive a newsletter and meetings are held with interesting speakers. Visits are also undertaken to important sites.

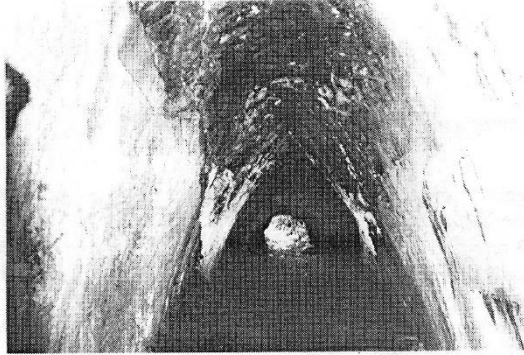
Subscriptions are £10 pa (Jan-Dec), with a reduction of £5 for unwaged persons. Life Membership is £250.

Further information can be obtained from the Society's Secretary and Newsletter Editor at:-

Runetree Press, PO Box 1035, London W2 6ZX
Tel: 02074-024562

THE PORTHCOTHAN 'FOGOU' by Howard Balmer

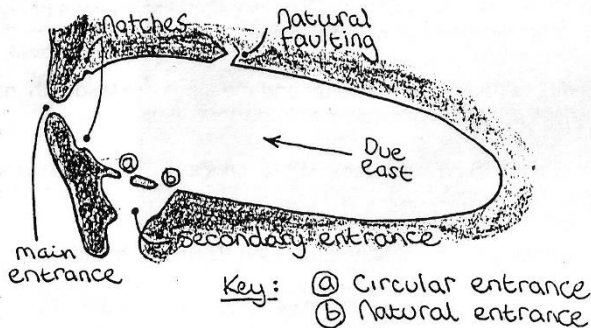
As with other interesting sites in this part of North Cornwall, Porthcothan 'Fogou' remains an enigma. Firstly it isn't a fogou. Its real name, "Vuga Hole" or "Long Vuga" means 'cave' in Cornish. the similarity between "Vuga" and "Fogou" has led people to believe it is a fogou in the archaeological sense.



Porthcothan Vuga [at CEMG visit in July 2002]

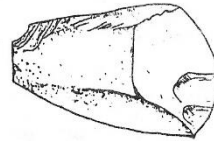
The CAU site history says that it is a natural cave, but I believe this to be wrong as well. I suspect that it was an incredibly important Neolithic site.

The Vuga is at SW8652 7134 and is reached by a path from above Porthcothan Beach to Porthcothan Mill and on up the valley towards Penrose. Along this valley path there is an almost hidden track on the left-hand side that climbs through dense undergrowth to the Vuga, which extends into the hillside some 36ft. After having located it among the thorns and mosses, it is necessary to crawl through its circular entrance. Once inside, the roof rises to a height of about 9ft, and the width increases to 5-6ft. As your eyes get accustomed to the dark, the first impression is of being inside a whale or an upturned boat. And this is no accident: underneath the lichens, mosses and calcite can clearly be seen the prehistoric pick marks. There are also depressions or notches in the wall to each side of the entrance.



Then, in the right-hand side, at ground level, is a circular entrance (similar to the main entrance, but less than a foot wide) to a side chamber [marked (a) on the diagram on p.22]. A little further on, the walls are deeply faulted. On the right-hand side, this fault joins with the side chamber [marked (b) on the diagram on p.22]. The side chamber (partly tooled, partly natural) leads outside through broken rock and brambles. Back inside, the arched walls lead to the back of the Vuga. From the back (where the acoustics for bass notes are wonderful), can be seen the majesty of the prehistoric tooling, illuminated by the circle of light at the entrance. This entrance faces due east, and the symbolism of the site seems to echo those of rock-cut chambers in France, Italy, Malta and Menorca. These European chambers are mostly described as Neolithic tombs. However, the earliest date I could find for the Vuga was contemporary with the Iron-Age fogou of West Penwith.

Then, I luckily found what I was looking for. On an unrelated visit to Truro Museum, I noticed a Neolithic flint axe from Long Vugha, St.Eval. Whilst much has been written on the Vuga relating to smuggling and secret tunnels, and even as a base for the Home Guard, its origins remain obscure. I could find no research linking the axe to its construction.



Neolithic axe-head from Long Vugha [Truro Museum].

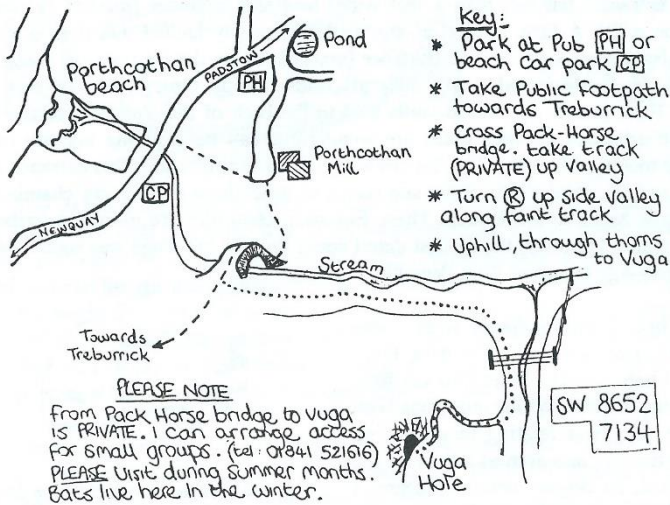
However, if this is indeed a Neolithic rock-cut chamber, then its shape, design and orientation all suggest that of a tomb. If it was designed as a dwelling, there would be no reason for the smoothly arched walling, and the entrance is not only small but lower than the back, meaning that firesmoke could not escape. Without a fire to dry the damp Vuga, habitation seems unlikely.

There are currently just two rock-cut Neolithic tombs listed in Britain and Ireland: St. Kevin's Bed at Glendalough and the Dwarfie Stane on Hoy (Orkney). The possibility that Porthcothan Vuga could be a third, and of a completely different type, is tantalising. Also tantalising are the tales, both past and present, of another Vuga somewhere in the valley! The Vuga is shown as "fogou" on OS maps. Please tread carefully as the valley is private and home to much wildlife. In the winter the Vuga is home to bats and should not be visited at all.



Dwarfie Stane rock-cut tomb, Hoy, Orkney Isles.

[Turn over page for location map of Porthcothan Vuga -



Location of Porthcoathan Vuga

FAIR EXCHANGE

MM is now exchanging with several pagan publications that are new to us.



News, views and articles relating to the Cornish pagan scene. Regular features include The Pagan Alphabet, Magikal Herbs, Calendar of Festivals, Open Forum, Whasson, etc.

Subs: £17/year (6 issues) or £9/half year from PO Box 83, Truro TR3 6ZJ. Make cheques payable to Purple Promotions.

Pagan Dawn

Revealing the Beliefs, Arts and Magic of the Old Ways, Pagan Dawn is a long-running successful 50pp quarterly magazine produced by the Pagan Federation, covering the whole pagan scene in Britain, with many interesting articles. Subscription details opposite.

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New-ish quarterly pagan magazine, with articles on paganism, the environment, sacred sites, history and archaeology, together with Pagan News & Events etc. Another really good 60pp magazine with much to interest MM readers. Subscription details opposite.

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www.strodes.ac.uk/semg/semg.htm

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THE CORNISH ANTIQUARY (folklore & antiquities) Back issues nos. 1-6 Oakmagic Publications, Flat 7, 9 Tower Walk, Weston-Super-Mare BS23 2JR £3.40... *www.oakmagicpublications.com*.

MEYN MAMVRO is available on annual subscription - 3 issues £6.50 (inc p&p) from:-51 CARN BOSAVERN, ST.JUST, PENZANCE, CORNWALL TR19 7QX. MM52 due Sept 2003 will include the Forgotten Wells of W.Penwith & Crankan wakes.

Most back numbers are now sold out, but photocopies can be done as a special service to subscribers and regular readers upon request at £2.00 each. Contents list & Index available on floppy disk (75p) or printed format (£2), or at *www.cornwt.demon.co.uk*

DALRIADA Taigh Arainn, Glenartney Hotel, Brodick, Isle of Arran KA27 8BX
www.dalriada.co.uk.....£15 [£2.50]

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PENDRAGON (Arthurian) 7 Verlon Close, Montgomery, Powys, Wales SY15 6SH£7.50 [£2.50]

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www.paganfed.demon.co.uk

PENTACLE (Pagan) 78 Hamlet Rd, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 1HH£12[£3.25]

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ISSN: 0966-5897

BELTANE CELEBRATIONS

Weds Apr 30th - 15th Annual Maypole Dance & feast at Carn Bosavern, St.Just 6.30pm. Details 01736-787186

Thurs May 1st - Obby Oss Day at Padstow. Details: 01841-533449

Sat May 3rd - Pagan Moot Celebrations at the Merry Maidens at 3pm. Details: 01736-787522

Sun May 4th - 15th Annual Three Wells Walk. Details 01736-787186

Thurs May 8th - Helston Flora Day + Hal-an-Tow. Details: 01326-565431

**CORNISH EARTH MYSTERIES**

Summer activities and events:-

Sun June 1st **More lesser-known sites in Kerrier** (inc. Tolvan Stone, Piskey Hall fogou, etc) with Andy Norfolk. Meet Crowan Church 11am.

Sun July 6th **Standing Stones of the St.Eval area** with Howard Balmer. Meet St.Eval Church 11am.

Sun Aug 3rd 5th Annual **Trencrom Hill Lammas Picnic** Bring food & drink to share and drums etc to play. Meet on top of hill at 11am.

Sun Sept 7th **Sacred Landscape, Holy Waters** with Rory Te'Tigo. Meet St.Just Library 11am for walk around Chapel Carn Brea, Chapel Euny & Bartinney wells.

For more details tel: Andy 01209-31519, or Cheryl 01736-787612.

**INTRODUCING ARCHAEOLOGY**

with Toni-Maree Rowe. Penwith College, Penzance. *Sat May 3rd* 1-3pm for 5 weeks. Tel: 01736-335010

SUMMER CELEBRATIONS

Mon June 23rd Midsummer Eve Bonfires on hilltops lit by Old Cornwall Societies throughout C'wall.

Sat June 28th Mazey Day, Penzance Serpent Dance & Penglaze 4.45pm.

**PENWITH ANTIQUITIES WALK**

with Ian Cooke (CAS). Sunday June 29th. For details tel: 01736-368282.

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with Rory Te'Tigo. Sundays in August 3rd, 10th, 17th & 24th. For details tel: 01736-787872

**PAGAN MOOTS**

Penzance - meets 2nd Tues each month at 53 Morrab Rd. Tel: Andy 01209-831519 or Sarah 01736-787522

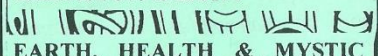
Truro/Falmouth area - meets 1st Sat each month. Tel: Dianne & Graham 01326-211002

St.Austell area - meets 3rd Thurs each month. Tel: Teresa & Rory 01726-852571

Bude - meets last Thurs each month at Brendon Arms. Tel: Lorraine 01288-359463

**FRIENDS OF THE WITCHCRAFT MUSEUM**

at Boscastle. Regular events, gatherings & talks. For further details tel: 01840 250111

**EARTH, HEALTH & MYSTIC FAYRE**

Sat May 10th & Sun May 11th and Sat Aug 2nd & Sun Aug 3rd St.John's Hall, Penzance 10am on. Tel: Karen 01736-330201