

CHAPEL CARN BREA - CEREMONIAL CENTRE  
VENTON EAST - ST.JUST'S HOLY WELL ●  
FOGOUS ● SACRED SITES ● NEWS  
\*plus\* *CORNWALL'S COLOURFUL SITES*

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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**

In the late summer of 2003, MM discovered that the Neolithic monument of Chûn Quoit had been interfered with. Someone had filled all the cracks and gaps in the stonework with large and small stones and vegetation, obviously to block off any air entering the dolmen. Then they had actually built a fire pit inside the Quoit itself, which had been used. It beggars belief as to what they thought they were doing: perhaps trying to create a 'sweat lodge' or something similar. Of course their actions were incredibly dangerous and irresponsible. At the very least the heat could have cracked some of the stones; at worst it could have brought the whole edifice crashing down on them.

What can be done to prevent such things happening? So far we have been 'lucky' in that no monuments here have been actually destroyed or damaged beyond repair. The worst case was of course the Mén-an-Tol and Lanyon Quoit attacked in the fire bomb incident of 1999, but there have also been cases of bits chipped off one of the stones at the Merry Maidens, and the sweat lodge built in the middle of Boscawen-ûn circle. If this kind of incident continues to go unchecked it may only be a matter of time before something irreparable happens to one of the sites. The majority of people who visit them are responsible and caring about them, but it only needs one or two mindless vandals, or perhaps what is worse, well-meaning but ignorant 'New-Age' types, to cause untold damage. It has been suggested that we should erect boards near to the major sites to try and educate people, but against this there is the argument that these might be unsightly in such an environmentally sensitive area, and could easily get vandalised too. There doesn't seem to be any obvious solution, but perhaps MM readers could come up with some new ideas on the subject?

On a rather happier note, the Bapistry or Well-Chapel at Madron, which has been the intermittent focus of vandalism over the last few years, and has suffered problems with the flow of water to the well, looks like it is at last having some care taken over it. The Historic Environment Service have done a good job of repairing the stonework around the well, and the Madron Community Forum have taken an interest in the site. They are in the process of applying for funding in order to undertake Management Works at the site, to improve the approach to it and the path leading up to it, as well as hopefully doing something about the water flow and drainage. Andy Norfolk has been liaising with the Forum and has drawn up a revised Management Plan, so this site at least should see some improvement in the near future.



## news page

Summer 2003 saw the 5th Annual **Trencrom Hill Lammas Picnic** on August 3rd, which this year was followed later in the afternoon by the Pagan Moot Lammas ritual (see opposite). Some people came for one, some for the other and some stayed for both, but there were fewer numbers than usual at the CEMG gathering. However, the Summer activities finished in grand style with a walk by Rory Te’Tigo **Sacred Landscape, Holy Waters** on Sunday Sept 7th, which attracted a good number of people, despite it being one of the few overcast and showery days in the glorious summer of 2003. Rory took the group to Chapel Carn Brea, Bartinney & Carn Euny wells in a good walk across the ancient landscape of West Penwith.

The 14th year of the Autumn series of talks began on Sept 25th with a rather special presentation by **Julie Walker** who travelled over from the Isle of Man to give a talk on “Manx Island Essences: a way of connecting with the land”. This was a multi-layered session, in which Julie laid out a large map of the island on the floor and told the audience about how she was guided to go to different sacred places there to find water and make the essences. She showed large pictures of the places, chanted their names and then invited people to walk the map in a guided pilgrimage to discover the essences for themselves, whilst she sang traditional Manx songs as an accompaniment. It was a deeply earth-connected evening, and a fascinating insight into her journey.

On Oct 30th, the evening before Samhain eve, **Michèle Brown** gave a presentation to a full house on “Shamanic Practices”. Michèle trained with a Peruvian shaman, and has followed the shamanic path now for some years. It was a compelling evening, consisting of talk, drumming, journeying, chanting and discussion. Michèle spoke of the origins of shamanism, and how it is used for very practical purposes to do with healing and justice. She also talked of connecting with the spirits and the ancestors, and the differences between the local spirits in different places, such as South America, Europe and Cornwall. It gave the audience much food for thought and spirit.

Finally on Nov 27th there was a slide presentation on “Sacred Ireland” with **Geraldine Andrew & Cheryl Traffon**. Geraldine and Cheryl took the audience on a journey around Ireland and her five provinces, from the south-east through the Boyne Valley (Newgrange and Loughcrew) and into the north, visiting stone circles, dolmens, and wells. After the break, the journey turned south to sites of the Goddess, such as the cave at Rathcroghan and the Beara stone in Co.Cork. Some of the beautiful stone circles in the Beara Peninsula were explored, and the circuit was completed, returning to the south-east and farewell. It was a geographical, mythological and sacred journey through a beautiful and amazing land.

# Penwith Pagan Moot



by Sarah Vivian

I have been asked by a MM reader whether we get our rituals out of books or whether they are “homemade”, so I thought other MM readers might be interested in the answer. Although we do sometimes look at other rituals to glean ideas, we feel that it is vital to create our own which suit the people, the occasion, and also suit the different locations we visit. Most existing rituals in books place prime importance on the words, which are usually said by the High Priestess and High Priest, leaving everyone else as congregation - our Moot prefer to be more involved, and a great deal of our planning is focussed on achieving maximum participation. We also try to plan in different forms of activities and movement, to breathe physical life into the rituals rather than being static.

So, here are some more “homemade” rituals to report on! At Lammas we were on top of Trencrom in the sunshine; we had a cauldron of abundance full of grain, and each person took some grain to represent their blessings, and to bless the next person in the circle, and our circle was created with grain - the birds on Trencrom were well fed. We also “turned the Wheel of the Year” using a length of red fabric, chanting and lifting the fabric up and down as we danced around the circle.

The theme for Equinox was all black and white, and the ritual was held on the beach at Sennen so that we could have a tug of war between light and dark, with soft sand to fall down on! We also had a cauldron full of sea water, to cleanse & purify before going into the dark of the year, and bulbs to take home to represent nurturing the promise of life through the Winter.

Samhain was at Whitesands Lodge at Sennen, so that we could walk their seven turn maze cut into the turf, to go inwards on the physical level. Yet again we were blessed with the weather, which was pouring with rain the previous and following evenings, and for a few hours beforehand - but was clear and mild during our ritual. Then there was a meditation to music/sound, to speak or listen to the Spirits, which worked well. This was followed by special effects in the cauldron for the spark of the New Year, and “Happy New Year” hugs all round.

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 at 7.15. There are news, views, events, and organising for rituals, and we have a special topic for each session - recent topics include Inspirational writings, which led to Inspirational books, and then to Pagan art, and then local legends. For further details please contact either of the local organisers - Sarah Vivian, 24 Queen Street, St Just, Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7JW. 01736 787522. e-mail [vivianatfarwest@supanet.com](mailto:vivianatfarwest@supanet.com), or Andy Norfolk, The Cottage, Crowan, Praze, Camborne, Cornwall, TR14 9NB. 01209 831519. e-mail . [andy.norfolk@connectfree.co.uk](mailto:andy.norfolk@connectfree.co.uk)



## Readers write

### LOOKING AFTER SACRED SITES

“In the early eighties, when I first discovered Paganism, Earth Mysteries and the Goddess, I made endless pilgrimages to ancient sacred sites. I always had work on myself I wanted to do at these places. I asked for help with new directions and projects, but mostly I asked for healing: healing after a relationship break-up, healing for my ME, healing after my brother was killed, healing after an operation, healing for my conflict-torn psyche. And always I received something and came away changed.

By the mid nineties, when I was older, healthier, more contented and influenced by Buddhism, making requests at sacred sites was no longer my main focus. Instead I wanted to just be there, to experience the places and their energies, and to experience myself in those places. The concentration of ancient spiritual energies still awed and moved me, and I still left feeling different and changed.

Nowadays my focus has shifted again. Distressingly and increasingly frequently, I arrive to find that the site needs *my* healing, my help. My first experience of this was at Swallowhead spring (Avebury), where I originally went to receive the blessing of water flowing out of the lovely spring in the chalk. Then the water dried up, and instead I started to go to make offerings and prayers *for* the water to return. And now we go to Madron Baptistry to find that the stonework has been damaged, to Upper Boscaswell Well to find the drainage channel blocked, to the Mên-an-Tol to help it recover from the shocking attack by arson, to Silbury Hill after the appalling damage to the shaft, and everywhere to remove litter and ugly inappropriate ritual detrius.

I suppose that for many of us, over twenty years or more, our experience of ‘Earth Mysteries’ has done a 180 degree reversal, from supplicants to healers, from receivers to givers and protectors. Sadly, this reflects not only our increased spiritual maturity, but the increasing damage and threats to our precious sacred sites. What horrendous loss this is to everybody.”

*Sheila Bright, Cornwall*

“As a regular visitor to West Penwith over the last thirty years or so, I have seen much improvement over access to some sites, but, on the other hand, seen much vandalism and overgrown sites that makes my heart sink. I refer to the painting of some monuments, and the crass attempt of some landowners to keep the public away from the sites (for example, the continuing saga at Sancreed Well, and the often overgrown vegetation at Tregeseal Stone Circle, the holed stones, and particularly at Zennor Hill). But on the whole, I have found the Penwith farmers to be polite and welcoming to the walker, who wishes to walk across the sacred hills and fields.”

*Stuart Jennings, Weston-Super-Mare*

## A PLEA FOR TOLERANCE

"In two recent articles, mention has been made of 'rubbish' left at sacred sites in Cornwall, in particular Sancreed Well. Whilst none of us like real rubbish, and we should all take care of sites and the environment as a whole, I was shocked by the intolerance and prejudice implied. To judge another person's offering as rubbish just because you don't like it, is mean-spirited and small-minded. Just because an offering is not handmade or new or pretty doesn't mean it doesn't have deep meaning to the person who left it. Maybe that plastic dolly is just rubbish, or maybe it was left in memory of a lost child - who are you to judge? Why do you presume to play 'god/goddess' and decide whose offerings are worthy? Visit any living sacred site in other countries, like Ireland, Mexico, India, etc., and you will see all sorts of 'modern' offerings - all of which are genuinely left. Times have changed and so has worship. Not everyone has the same approach to worship. If you want to force everyone to worship the same, join the established religions! The pagan community I want to belong to shows tolerance and responsibility - in balance."

*Emma Rawling, Devon*

*These letters from different perspectives raise important concerns about the management of sacred sites. Is it more important to 'clean up' the sites as part of the process of protecting and caring for them, or should we adopt a more 'live and let live' attitude? MM welcomes comments and points of view from other readers. [Ed.]*

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## LOST AND FOUND

### MORE TREASURES UNCOVERED BY JONATHAN CLEMES

Cornish ace treasure-finder Jonathan Clemes has struck gold again. With his metal detector Jonathan has already discovered a hoard of more than 1000 Roman coins from a Creek near Lerryn in 2000 [see MM43 p.3], a Viking silver coin near St.Austell in 2002 [see MM46 p.3] and a Bronze-Age arrow head in the St.Austell area and a solid bronze Celtic brooch in a field near the Fal estuary also in 2002 [see MM50 p.10]. Now he has found part of another brooch, this time a Roman one, and a Roman gold coin.

The bronze brooch, thought to date from between 55 BCE - 50CE, was found in a field of stubble close to where he lives in St.Austell. He said: "I hadn't been out detecting for four and a half months, so to find this on my first day back was pretty lucky. We were looking for shards of pottery and came across some Samian ware and other bits of pottery which is probably Mediterranean, when we came across a piece of a storage jar from about the 1st century CE. A few yards away, less than a foot below the surface, I discovered the brooch". It is about an inch in diameter and still bears some enamel decoration, despite being in the ground for more than 2000 years. Part of the pin has been broken off, perhaps when it was lost, but some engraving on it is still visible.

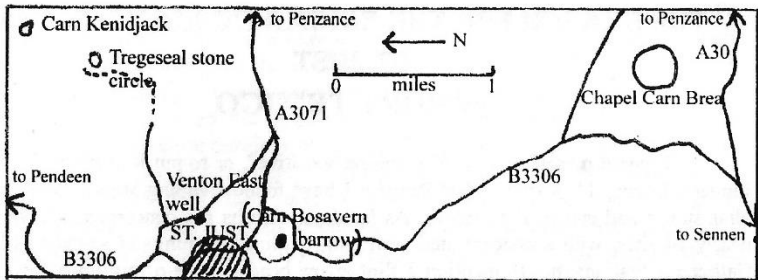
As if this were not enough for one Summer, a few weeks later he discovered a very rare Roman gold coin dating back to the 1st century BCE. Experts have dated it to 65-88 BCE, and say that it is the only gold coin from this period ever to be discovered in Cornwall. Depicting the head of the Emperor Nero on one side and the Roman god Jupiter on the other, the coin is in almost perfect condition and has been valued at £1200. Anna Tyacke of the Royal Cornwall Museum said that the coin would have been worth about two months' pay to a Roman soldier. "It wasn't the sort of money you could use to trade with", she said, "but it could be exchanged for local money. It almost certainly belonged to a centurion, as Roman auxiliaries were always paid in silver coins. It probably fell out of his pocket while he was riding and hasn't been seen since until now." If this is the case, it does raise the question of what a Roman centurion was doing in Cornwall, a country that has always been supposed not to have been conquered by the Romans [see *Were the Romans ever in Cornwall?* MM44 p.6-7].

### CELTIC METAL SPOON DISCOVERED AT CHYSAUSTER

A tiny rare copper alloy spoon, believed to be around 2000 years old, was discovered in the summer of 2003 at Chysauster, the Celtic Iron-Age village near Penzance. Workmen, who were installing posts for a new disabled access at the site, came across the spoon, which is only 2cm across, although the handle, about one inch of which has survived, is believed to have been quite long and pointed. Charlie Johns of the Historic Environment Service, said that he believed that the spoon may have been used for eating shellfish: the long handle would have been used to prise the shell open and the spoon bowl used to scoop out the flesh for eating. Only one similar object has been found in Cornwall, at Newquay, another seaside town, which would fit in well with the idea of it being used for shellfish. Charlie Johns added: "This is a significant find because there have been very few metal objects recovered at Chysauster, and this one is in particularly good condition, even though the handle is missing."



## FOCUS ON ..... ST. JUST IN PENWITH AREA



This issue of MM takes a look at some sites and recent discoveries in the St. Just area. On p.8 we investigate the possible location and details of St. Just's very own 'lost' holy well Venton East. Then, from p.14 onwards there is a major article on Chapel Carn Brea, which lies to the SE of the town on the way to Sennen. Finally, there is this issue's 'Fuggy Holes' article on Pendeen fogou, which lies some 3 miles or so in the opposite direction from St. Just to the north of the town.

But first, a recent publication has revealed some hitherto unknown or little-known facts about St. Just. *The Cornwall Industrial Settlements Initiative - Conservation Area Partnership* by N.J.Cahill of the Cornwall Archaeological Unit (2002) included a map and gazetter of all known Industrial and pre-Industrial sites in St. Just. One of these identified was a Bronze-Age **Barrow** on Carn Bosavern (where of course MM is published) at SW3715 3090, located to the west of the Reservoir in the area where now the cars park. No remains of the Barrow are now visible, but it does reveal that this hilltop, like the others in West Penwith mentioned in Paul Bonnington's article (on p.18-19) was also crowned by a sacred site possibly facing Chapel Carn Brea.

Secondly, recent research on the medieval **Plen-an-Gwarry** in the centre of St. Just reveals that it was probably originally an Iron-Age prehistoric Round (enclosed settlement) before it became adapted as a 'playing place' for the performance of Miracle Plays and games in the Middle Ages. This interpretation is strengthened by the discovery that the original entrance of the Plen faced directly north-east, the orientation of the rising sun at the Summer Solstice.

Finally, the recent fires on Kenidjack (Truthwall) Common have revealed more of the original Bronze Age landscape there. More patterns of stones can now be discerned, perhaps the remnants or original settlement walls or stone rows. And around **Carn Kenidjack** itself an enclosure wall has been uncovered, similar to those identified around other sacred hill sites, such as Carn Gulva to the east, and Caer Brân to the west. It now seems that these sacred hilltops are following a pattern, with a settlement below (in the case of Tregeseal, including a stone circle) looking up towards the holy hilltop, perhaps thought of as the dwelling place of the gods and goddesses.

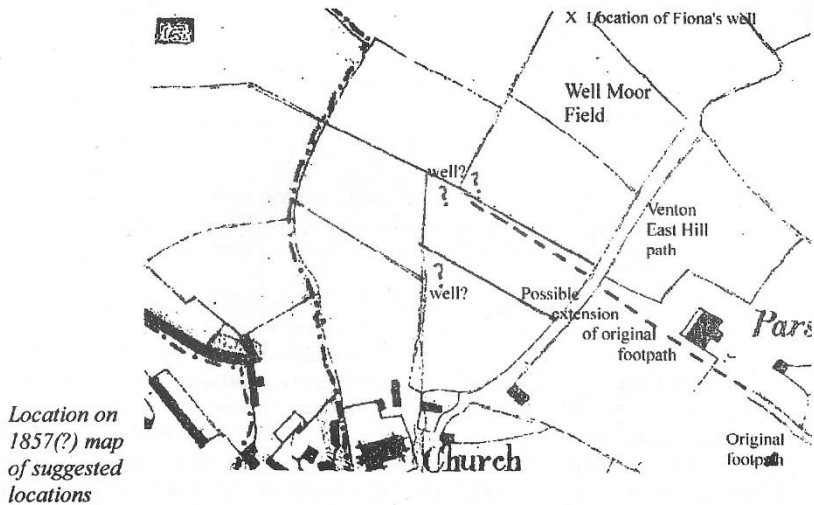
## **VENTON EAST - THE SEARCH FOR THE ENIGMATIC HOLY WELL OF ST.JUST by RORY TE'TIGO**

I regard myself as a "field variation sensitive", or to put it in plain English "a Finder". During 11 years in West Penwith I have found standing stones, holed stones, altar stones and cup marked stones. As far as microliths are concerned, I have found nearly 14 sites, with a concentrated scattering of flint knappings at so-called Hunter-Gatherer Stations, not to mention 3 flint arrow heads. Some of my finds though are what I call secondary finds; like the Romano-Celtic Iron Age stone bead that was given to me as part of an artistic collage. Or the site of an old well that was shown to me by a woman who took part in one of my annual August Well Walks.

One of the pet projects of people as different as our much admired local Antiquarian Craig Weatherhill, and our St.Just Town Clerk Elaine George, is the search for Venton East, the Holy Well of St.Just. There are several places called St.Just (including St.Just-in-Roseland in Cornwall, and Saint Just in Brittany). One can assume that Justus was a far-travelling Aeneasian-Christian Priest, who founded or christianised settlements all over the Atlantic fringe. Or that there was more than one Justus. Personally I believe both.

Venton East Well is supposedly located somewhere on Venton East Hill, or near the footpath leading down that hill. It has allegedly not been seen for at least 100 years. Therefore, there are no eyewitnesses left who could locate it. The Cornwall Archaeological Unit places it at the bottom of Venton East Hill, in the middle of a field that is called Well Moor. Elaine George agrees with that, but puts it at the bottom of Venton East footpath in Well Moor. Craig Weatherhill contributes to this conundrum, by pointing out that there is a double-hedged path that led west from Venton East Hill footpath. The remains of this path lie along the south-west boundary of the Vicarage Gardens. He says that the Holy Well was at the end of it in the north-west corner of the field above the Rugby Ground.

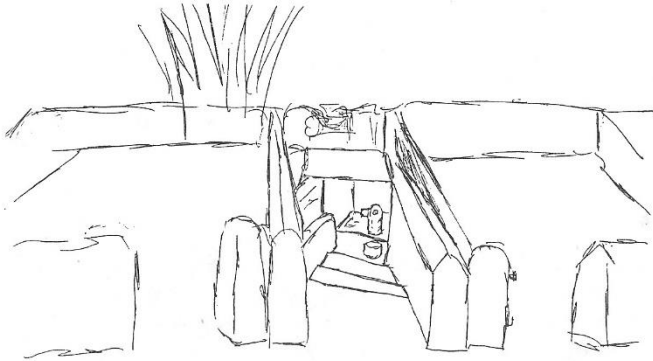
Up until this year, my personal hunch was that it was even one field further up the hill, towards the Church. Elaine George points out that there is a mention in the minutes of the St.Just U.D.C that the well had been contaminated by effluent from the church square, and had therefore been closed. If one looks at the site I originally proposed, one can see that the new graveyard extension is very close by, so the effluent could have come from there. However, this year I received some new information that radically changed the ideas of all of us, and has led, I believe, to the discovery of the actual location of Venton East well.



*Location on  
1857(?) map  
of suggested  
locations*

Whenever I conduct my Well Walks people quite often approach me, like eager schoolchildren in class, saying “Oh, I know of a well”. Knowing that there are at least 160 wells or water sources in St. Just, I find it sometimes difficult to keep an interested face to this! But this time, the woman, Fiona O’Cleary, formerly of St. Just, was very adamant. I just had to see this well. As it was so close to the Well Moor Field, I agreed to make a special date to see “her well”. As this was in August, there was very little to see. The site was identifiable, but so much covered in blackberries that Fiona and I assumed that the well had been filled in with gravel. There the matter rested. The story nevertheless took an interesting turn some three years later in the Summer of 2003.

MM editress Cheryl Straffon had asked me to write a little contribution to MM about the search for Venton East. In preparation for that, I took another look at the box of old maps of the St. Just area, kept in St. Just Library. One of the maps I looked at was the 1857 map of Tin Mining Loads and Mining Claims. I realised that the Turnpike Road, at the bottom of Venton East Hill had not been built then. Looking at Well Moor, I saw that it was substantially larger than today. And that the well, that I had originally been shown by Fiona, was not only inside the original Well Moor Field, but that it was in a peculiar north shaped extension of it. What was more, the mineral rights boundary, basically being to the west of Well Moor Field, showed a peculiar thin finger coming from the north-west into the area of the well. Apparently, there was something in that corner of Well Moor Field that the Tin Mining Claimants had wanted, and wanted badly. What could that be, but a reliable water source?.

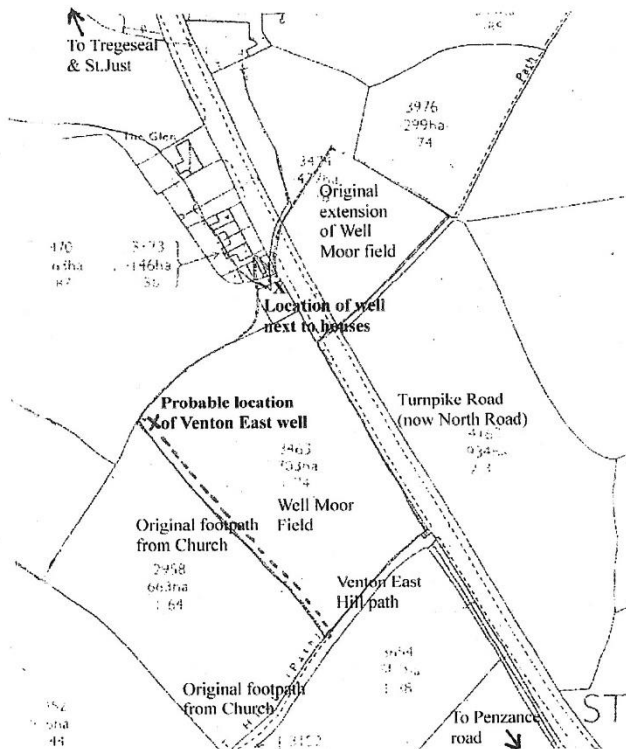


*The well at the bottom of Well Moor Field*

I went there to have another look. Not only was the well not filled in, but it was also in a state close to what it had been when it had been abundant, most likely in 1963. The original aluminium pot that had last been used to ladle out the water, to water the allotments around it, was still standing by its side. There was also a large iron pump mechanism protruding from the water. Talking to Elaine George about it, I learned that this water source had been turned into a leet. And Holmans Foundry, that in the 1870s-1880s had been built on the other side of the Turnpike Road, in the cut-off part of Well Moor Field, had used it for its water.

Looking at the Well Moor Field well, I came to the conclusion that the lower part of the well surround is not only more aligned to the north than the upper part of the well structure, but I also believe it to be much older. In my eyes, this well is the one that gave Well Moor Field its name. However I was not convinced that this well was Venton East. The usual type of Holy Well is, in West Penwith at least, what I would call a “steps down to, lintel over well”. The steps are often in such an alignment as to allow the spring/autumn equinox or midsummer sun to shine into the well chamber. The orientation of the Well Moor Field well steps are towards NNW. I did not feel that that I had solved the mystery of Venton East, the enigmatic Holy Well of St.Just. But I did believe that I had found the well that gave Well Moor Field its name.

And so, the matter would have rested there, had there not been one more twist to the tail, that led to Venton East well itself. In one of the usual, unusual coincidences that happen when one is searching out old holy sites, I met up “by chance” with John Harry of St.Just who told me that Venton East Holy Well, in its last stage of evolution, was an Iron Pump in the *top* (SW) corner of Well Moor Field. He knew this because his mother had seen it used as a source of drinking water in her youth, early in the 20th century. This made a lot of sense, as there is a right of way shown on the maps that leads from Venton East Hill footpath, along the southern field boundary hedge, into that corner where the footpath ends. This may have been the purpose of this original footpath to lead from the Church to Venton East well, before the Turnpike road was built.



*1908 map of the area, showing the new Turnpike road with location of Well Moor Field Well & Venton East well superimposed*

So, it seems likely that this was the original location of Venton East holy well, not far from the Church and accessed by an ancient footpath from the Church. It was obviously much visited, but it was only John Harry who had remembered his mother going there and drinking from it as a child that has prevented its location being lost for ever. Plans are now underway to seek permission of the Well Moor Field owner to have this corner cut free of brambles and explore it with a metal detector, trying to find any remains of the Iron Pump. Interestingly then, Well Moor Field contained two wells: this original holy well of Venton East in its top (SW) corner, and a more utilitarian well, Well Moor Field Well in its bottom (NNW) corner, which was used as a source of water by the cottages nearby, and later became separated from the field. The search for the enigmatic holy well of St. Just has revealed far more than anyone could have thought.

*Material [c] Rory Te'Gigo. Additional material by Cheryl Traffon.*

## CORNWALL'S COLOURFUL SITES

*This new MM feature spotlights photographs of some of the ancient places in glorious colour. For this one we revisit some EVENTS OF 2003.*



*Snow falls at the Mên-an-Tol in January [c] Cheryl Traffon*



*Padstow's colourful maypole on Obby Oss Day [c] Sheila Bright*



*The Lady of the Flowers at Midsummer Bonfire on Chapel Carn Brea [c] H..Davies*

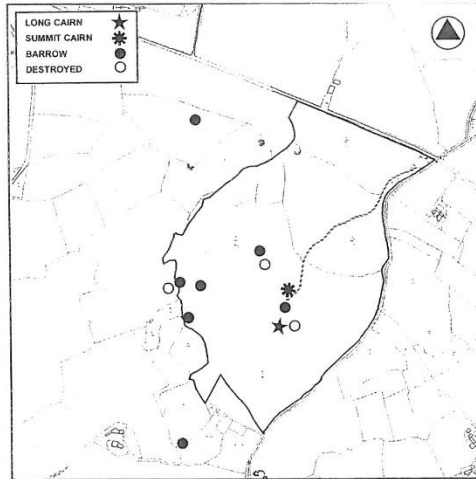


*Gŵn Rith  
standing stone  
gets replaced  
in the Summer  
[c] Ann  
Preston-Jones*

## CHAPEL CARN BREA - A CEREMONIAL CENTRE

by PAUL BONNINGTON

*Paul Bonnington is Archaeological Adviser to the National Trust in West Cornwall. He has recently done research and practical work on the well-known holy hilltop of Chapel Carn Brea near St. Just, and here presents for the first time his up-to-date research on the site.*



*Chapel Carn Brea  
hilltop site with  
location of barrows.  
[c] Paul Bonnington*

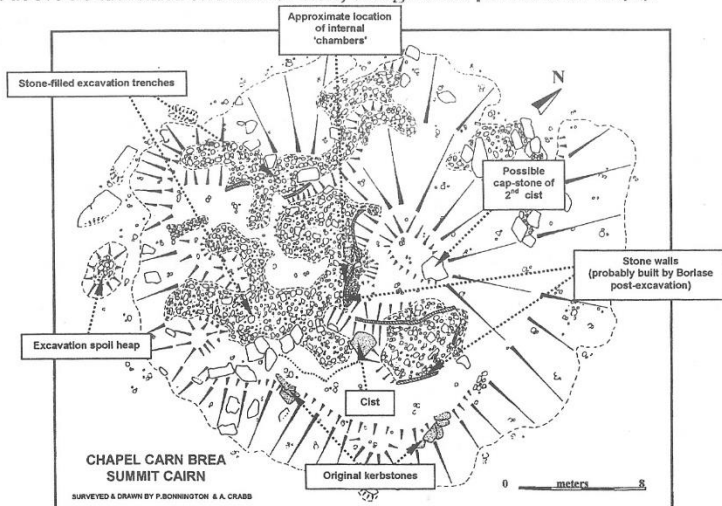
Chapel Carn Brea, situated in the far south-west of West Penwith, has been a focus for human activity and pilgrimage for millennia. Often described as Britain's 'first and last hill', this mass of granite rises to over 200 metres in height, and is clearly visible from many points throughout the region and beyond. A survey of the hill produced by the Cornwall Archaeological Unit for the National Trust in 1990 showed that it once contained at least forty distinct archaeological features, ranging from prehistoric barrows to the site of a medieval chapel and a collection of WWII military installations. In this piece I will focus on the foremost sites, and examine their role in determining Chapel Carn Brea's particular significance within the Bronze Age ceremonial landscape of West Penwith.

**THE BARROWS DESCRIBED:** The 1990 survey shows that at least eleven barrows were once present on the summit and slopes of Chapel Carn Brea [see map above]. Sadly only seven remain, and these all bear the scars of antiquarian or agricultural intrusion (destroyed mounds with tell-tale central depressions). Despite the loss of so many, the group retains some very important sites, including an Early Neolithic long-mound, an incredibly rare monument in Cornwall and the most westerly known example in mainland Britain, and the huge and impressive Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age (EBA) summit cairn, by a slight margin the largest EBA barrow in West Penwith.



Starting with the earliest, the **long-cairn** was classified as such by the Ordnance Survey in 1985, and consists of an 11 m linear stone mound built against, and in harmony with, a natural granite outcrop which extends the site by a further 26 m. Orientated NNW to SSE, it is situated on a false crest to the west of the summit where it commands panoramic views over the land and sea. Several earth-fast stones in the man-made part of the cairn suggest that it may have included an internal structure, similar perhaps to the burial chambers found at West Kennet in Wiltshire and other comparable sites. Although no south-western long-mounds have been excavated in modern times, radiocarbon evidence from comparable British sites place them firmly in the Early Neolithic period (c. 4400 – 3000 calendar years (cal) BC), making them contemporary with the quoits and tor-enclosures of western Cornwall.

Located some 50 m to the NNW is the massive **summit cairn**, which can best be described as a 'prestige barrow' based on its size, complexity and prominent position. Radiocarbon evidence from such monuments show that they generally date from the Late Neolithic (c. 2500 – 2000 cal BC) and/or EBA (2000 – 1500 cal BC) periods. It was recognised as a barrow by local antiquarian W.C. Borlase, who had previously thought it merely the platform on which the medieval chapel that gave the hill its name was built (Craig Weatherhill has already noted in MM that Chapel Carn Brea correctly means 'hill of the cairn chapel'). Borlase excavated the site in 1872 and 1879, and found that it consisted of a huge stone cairn, around 21 m in diameter by 5 m in height, which was defined by a stepped wall or 'kerb' of well dressed granite blocks. It had originally been surrounded by a free-standing stone ring, though sadly this no longer remains. Inside the cairn he uncovered three concentric walls, the most central of which enclosed two stone-lined chambers or 'cists' which contained a few pot sherds, some 'slimy earth', and in one case a very small amount of cremated bone. Inserted into the mound above he identified two further cists, though these proved to be empty.





*Chapel Carn Brea Summit Cairn: taken in 1880 immediately after the site had been excavated. The mound was reconstructed by W.C.Borlase to retain its visibility to seafarers.*

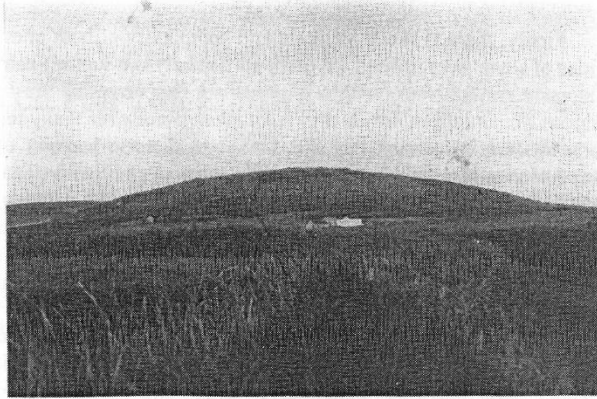
Of the other **five barrows** on Chapel Carn Brea, two are located near the summit cairn (as were two which no longer exist), and three are on the lower western slopes. All consist of small stone mounds defined by circular or oval stone kerbs, the largest 11 and the smallest 5.8 m in diameter. Such sites are classed as ‘kerbed-cairns’, the most common and widely dispersed EBA barrow type in Britain. In 1907, one of the Chapel Carn Brea examples was shown by excavation to have contained a stone-lined cist which held an urned cremation burial and three flint objects. Another incomplete vessel was found near the western edge of the barrow, suggesting that it may have been a ‘cemetery mound’ (a common EBA type in western and northern Britain, so called because they held multiple rather than single ‘Wessex type’ burials). Surface remains show that at least three more of the hill’s barrows had cists, though it cannot be assumed that they also contained human remains (see below).

**THE BARROWS DISCUSSED:** Although the barrows on Chapel Carn Brea are clearly a disparate group of monuments, all fall into established western and northern British typological categories. At the same time they also reflect the expression of more locally defined traditions, via subtle variations in their architectural and material character. The barrows on Chapel Carn Brea are therefore at once both familiar and unique. However, although all are archaeologically interesting, the long-cairn and summit barrow are by far the most important in terms of why and how Chapel Carn Brea functioned as a foci within the EBA ceremonial landscape.

Firstly, there is the sheer scale and complexity of both sites to consider. Huge quantities of stone were utilised for each, particularly the summit-cairn which contained some massive granite blocks within its structure. Their creation must have represented a tremendous human effort, which may have taken place over many tens, if not hundreds of years. Modern excavation has shown that prehistoric barrows often had long and complex histories resulting from numerous structural and depositional events. Although, it is difficult to comment on the development of the un-excavated long-cairn, the summit-cairn has many close parallels of multi-phase origin: e.g. Balowall locally and Glendorgal near Newquay. Ethnography shows that the ceremonial acts of creating and developing monuments may have been crucial for establishing, maintaining or challenging socially inherent religious ideologies or power structures during prehistory. The cultural significance of such ritually motivated actions, and the associated histories thereof, must have been instrumental in establishing the symbolic identity of cultural monuments like barrows, particularly large and complex structures like the summit-cairn.

As well as the investment of time and effort, the cultural significance of prehistoric barrows would have been determined greatly by the ritual media deposited in and around them. As we have seen, the summit cairn and at least one of the small barrows contained human remains, a scenario commonly associated with such sites. However, more than 45% of Cornish barrows excavated with modern techniques never held burials at all, which clearly challenges the common notion that barrows were established primarily as 'graves'. Rather, there is a growing assumption among archaeologists that human remains were utilised because they were a powerful symbolic resource used to culturally validate a monument via the ritual statement they made. By extension, the same might be said of all the resources used for and within Cornish barrows, from the materials utilised for their construction, to the waterworn pebbles, cultural artefacts, and deposits of charcoal and clay commonly placed within them. Again, any knowledge and understanding of the resources utilised for sites like the long- and summit-cairns must have greatly influenced their perceived power.

The prominent positioning of the large long- and summit-cairns would also have been an important demonstration of their particular cultural significance. Both were clearly designed to stand out and be seen, reflecting a deliberate strategy employed by prehistoric monument builders to create a visible cultural presence in the landscape. This is also true for the hill's smaller cairns, which are all located on slight rises so that they suddenly became apparent when viewed or approached from certain directions. The establishment of such visual relationships would have been instrumental in maintaining and strengthening cultural links between far flung communities, and would have significantly enhanced any territorial role that barrows might have played. In addition, ethnographic evidence illustrates that the constant presence of ceremonial monuments can be a primary factor in the reinforcement of one's own cultural 'sense of self', by providing reminders about, for example, religious beliefs or the dominance of certain kin-groups.



The final and most compelling factor in determining not only the significance of the long- and summit-cairns, but of Chapel Carn Brea itself, is that they would have been perceived by EBA people as an ‘ancestral presence’ in their landscape. Radiocarbon evidence from comparable sites shows that the former, and probably the latter, would have been long-established before the other barrows were built on the hill. Borlase himself felt that the ‘chambers’ in the summit cairn were the remains of a ‘passage-grave’, and that the site had originally been a Scillonian entrance-grave before being swallowed by the large EBA barrow we see today (another scenario is that the chambers, which are no longer visible, were actually cists, and that the whole structure is EBA in origin, though still undoubtedly of earlier date than the adjacent kerbed-cairns). Many other British Neolithic monuments were radically reinterpreted during the EBA, Stonehenge being the most obvious example, and it certainly occurred at nearby Balowall which also started life as an entrance-grave before becoming the only other barrow in West Penwith of comparable size and architectural complexity to the summit-cairn.

A crucial factor in determining why early monuments such as those on Chapel Carn Brea were accorded this symbolic importance during prehistory would have been their inclusion within local oral histories and legends. No doubt the long- and summit-cairns would have been central to these stories, as indeed would the very hill on which they were built. Ethnography has ably demonstrated that bold topographical features, such as those which define West Penwith and other upland zones, would have played a crucial role within the cultural histories of a people who sought to explain their origins and those of the world around them. This is supported by strong archaeological evidence, often in the form of worked and waste flint, which proves that many of the ridges, hill- and cliff-tops utilised for EBA barrows had already been the focus of human activity for millennia: e.g. at Boscregan locally, and at Crowdy Marsh on Bodmin Moor. Significantly, we know that such ‘ancestral artefacts’ were recognised and regarded as special by EBA people, as they frequently included them alongside other ritual media within their barrows: e.g. as at Caerloggas I near St Austell.

**CHAPEL CARN BREA AS A PRIMARY FOCI IN THE EBA CEREMONIAL LANDSCAPE:**

As we can see, it is highly likely that Chapel Carn Brea was already a significant foci in the landscape by the EBA, as it contained both Britain's most westerly known long-cairn, and probably the foundations for what was to become the region's largest round-barrow. The final part of this piece will address how this significance is reflected by the arrangement of the post-Neolithic monuments which surround the hill, and how this ultimately demonstrates just how special Chapel Carn Brea was to those who inherited this early British ceremonial landscape.

Many local sites could be cited as relevant to this discussion, including the adjacent enclosed hilltop disc-barrow clusters on Bartinney and Caer Bran, and the region's many small EBA kerbed-cairns, including a group which form the largest coastal barrow cemetery in Cornwall (situated between Kenidjack and St Levan, this includes Carn Creis cemetery mound which contained multiple burials and numerous faience beads with 'Wessex' associations). The distribution of these and many other examples clearly demonstrates that they were deliberately sited in deference to Chapel Carn Brea: e.g. every barrow in the coastal group was positioned so that it had a clear view of the hill, no matter what visual relationships occurred from site to site. This pattern, which crucially doesn't apply to any other location in the immediate area to anything like the same extent, is a recognisable phenomenon within many prehistoric British landscapes: e.g. around Stonehenge and Cranbourne Chase in Wessex. Closer to home, this phenomenon can be seen at Carn Galva, a hugely impressive outcrop in northern West Penwith around which a series of quoits, entrance-graves and round barrows are clearly focussed, due no doubt to the presence of its Early Neolithic tor-enclosure.

**CONCLUSION:** As we have seen, there are many reasons why Chapel Carn Brea might be regarded as the primary focus in the far west of Penwith's EBA landscape. Undoubtedly imbued with myth and legend, it contained both the oldest and largest barrows in the area, and was surrounded by many others which were ordered in deference to it. Because of a perceived association with that which had gone before, places like Chapel Carn Brea would have been regarded as symbolic resources which both determined, and could be utilised within, the structure of an expanding ceremonial landscape. The presence of Chapel Carn Brea and similar foci therefore would ultimately have played a crucial role in determining not only the creation and significance of the monuments built on and around them, but ultimately that of the broader ceremonial landscape itself.



# MY FAVOURITE FUGGY HOLES

## 2: PENDEEN FOGO

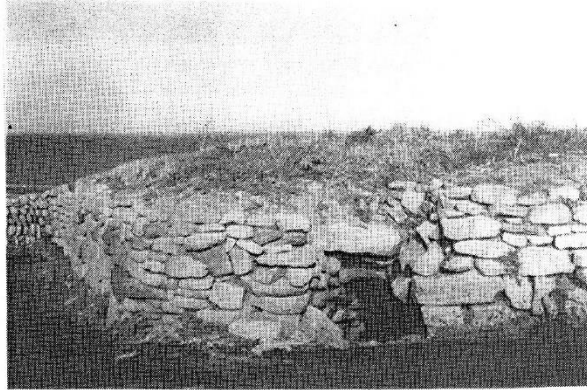
by WELLA PENWRATH

Cornwall's fogous, or as they used to be called by the local people, 'fuggy-holes' are very special to me. In the second of these features, I visit one of the lesser-known sites - Pendeen fogou.

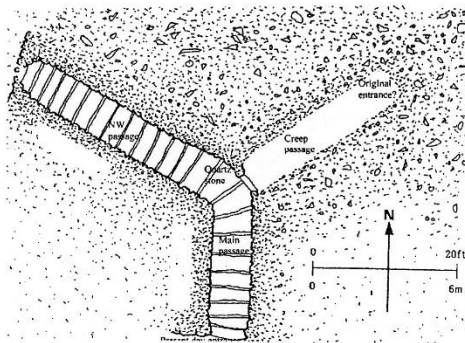
Perhaps it is the approach to the fogou that puts many people off. You have to park and walk through a very muddy farmyard, negotiate a double line of fences that are a cow pen, and frequently encounter slurry or cattle manure sloshing around the place. But when I see the fogou ahead of me, my heart always lifts. Despite the farmyard surroundings (and after all, this is the countryside), the fogou is in stunning position. If we could go back 2000 or so years to when it was in use, and take away the present-day farm, we would probably see a Celtic Courtyard House settlement, on the edge of which, with the Atlantic ocean as a backdrop, was this sacred and magical fogou.

As you enter the fogou, there is an abrupt change of mood, from the bright Upper World to the sudden darkness and stillness of the fogou interior. The slope down into the fogou is quite steep, and the Upper World is rapidly left behind. Your eyes take a couple of minutes to adjust to the dark, and then the passage ahead of you appears. The height is only about 5ft, so you have to duck as you walk through, holding the cold granite slabs on each side to steady yourself. After a relatively short distance, about 23ft the passage turns very suddenly to the left in a north-westerly direction. At this point there is a distinctive quartz stone in the passage, that, despite the darkness, gleams whiter and lighter than the surrounding dark granite. What was the purpose of this abrupt NW change of direction, and the deliberate placing of the quartz stone? It is as if the builders of the fogou are leaving a message, but what could that message be? Perhaps it was a 'signal' that the initiate was about to enter the most sacred part of the fogou, a part that was deliberately aligned to face the direction of the Midsummer Solstice sunset.

But before we enter this NW passage, we need to stop a moment and look down at our feet. For, just visible below us, and easily missed if we did not know it was there, is a small entrance hole, only about 1½ft high and 2ft wide. If going down into the fogou feels like a journey into the Underworld, then this entrance must be the very heart of the darkness. In order to get in there you literally have to get down on your stomach and crawl into the chamber, known as the 'creep passage'. Once inside, a very claustrophobic experience in the pitch black dark, the passage does get bigger, rising to a height of 4ft or so, and a width of 5½ft, so you can make your way at least on your hands and knees or in a crouching position. This creep passage goes on for some 25½ft before coming to an abrupt end.



This creep passage was probably the original entrance to the fogou, and where it is now blocked was once open, at least at the special ritual times of the year. The initiate would creep along this passage and then, on his or her belly, crawl through the gap into the main fogou. This would have been an amazing initiation into the Underworld. I don't think that it has been remarked on elsewhere, not even in Ian Cooke's magnificent book on the fogous *Mother and Son*, that this creep passage, oriented as it is in a NE direction, could have been deliberately aligned to face the rising Midsummer solstice sun. If this was the case, then perhaps the initiate would wait at the entrance for the Solstice sun to rise out of the sea, and shine into the creep entrance. Then, he or she would crawl up the passage, following the sun into the fogou. Perhaps they would remain there all day, chanting and meditating, and then, as the time drew close towards sunset they would turn into the NW passage, where they would await the moment when the sun would appear again at the end of this NW passage (now blocked) and sink slowly once more into the sea. A dramatic celebration of the sun on the longest day, and what a magical and incredibly powerful experience that must have been!



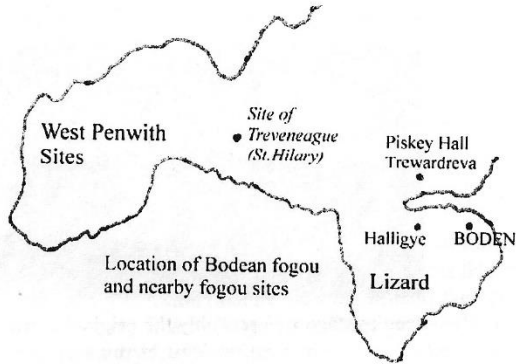
Plan of Pendeen fogou [after Cooke]

And so, it is time now to leave the Fogou, make our way back up the passage we have entered, and climb the slope back to the outside world. Arriving back in the farmyard, it feels like you have not only been down into a strange and rather eerie ancient site, but that you have entered another dimension altogether. We leave the farmyard with its Manor House, where the antiquarian Dr. Borlase once lived, and return to the everyday world changed by our time in the Fogou.

*More news on fogous overleaf*

## BODEAN FOGOU EXCAVATED

A fogou site, newly discovered in 1991 on the Lizard peninsula, is now being excavated by a team from the Historic Environment Section. The site is at Boden (or Bodean) near Manaccan, and is the first newly-discovered fogou site to be excavated using modern methods.

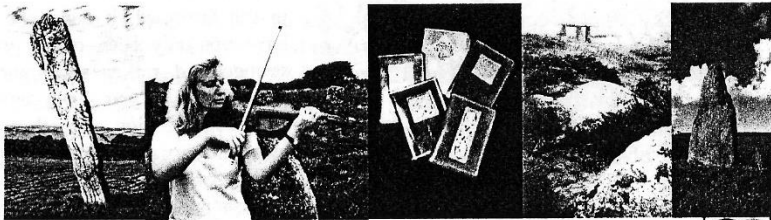


The site was first referred to by Polwhele in the early 19th century, but it wasn't until 1991 that the farmer took the CAU to the chamber, some 20-25 yds from an old apple tree. An exploratory trench was made followed by a magnetometer survey which revealed a passage of about 85 ft in length, orientated in a north (possibly north-easterly) direction. The fogou appeared to have been located within a rectangular enclosure and may have been part of an Iron-Age settlement, but the excavation will reveal much more about it. MM will report any results when they become known.

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## The Pipers Tune

The Cornish Bronze Age barrow that was put up for sale by rock musician Nic Potter [see MM52 p.5] was offered at an auction in London in September at a reserve price of £20,000. Although attracting a number of bids, the top amount offered was only £17,000 so was withdrawn from sale. Nic Potter, who had originally put it for sale on the Internet at a price of £150,000 (!), said afterwards: "In a sense I was relieved because if a bid of £18,000 had been made it would definitely have been sold, and thinking about it now how could I have sold a piece of Cornwall? Really, it's beyond value". The 4000 year old barrow, which lies on a hilltop on the land near Nancludra owned by Potter, has evidently been getting to him. "I have been lying awake at night thinking about how much I love the barrow" he said, "It would have bothered me for the rest of my life if someone had bought it as a grave (for themselves). To me it's a place full of life. I go there for peace and inspiration."

Although his family have owned the site since the 1950s, it wasn't until a couple of years ago that the barrow was discovered when Nic suddenly noticed that some of the rocks on the land were particularly prominent. After battling with the undergrowth he discovered the circle of granite rocks that made up the monument with paved areas at the east and west ends. The site measures 11.5 metres across and it is believed to be the largest barrow in Cornwall and of great national significance as well. It remains to be seen what will happen to it in the future, but for now Nic Potter says that maybe he was secretly hoping it would not be sold, and that he can now sleep more peacefully.

Another location that includes an ancient site is up for sale, if you have a quarter of a million pounds or more! Rosemerryn at Lamorna, which has been home to CAER, the alternative spiritual centre for courses and workshops, for the last few decades, is on the market. The site includes the Celtic Iron-Age fogou of Boleigh, which the current owner of the site, Jo May, wrote about in his book *Fogou*. Although he has been wanting to sell the site for some time now, all previous negotiations by interested parties have foundered. So now he has put the large house on the open market for £525,000. There are also gardens, seven acres of woodland, a bungalow and a log cabin offered for a further £175,000. The fogou was investigated by *Time Team* a few years ago and revealed that it originally consisted of two Iron Age round houses as well, so there has been occupation here for 2000 or more years.

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3 Nanturras Row, Goldsithney, Penzance TR20 9HE. Or ring Andy Norfolk (01209-831519) Website: [www.meynmamvro.co.uk/earth.htm](http://www.meynmamvro.co.uk/earth.htm)**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. Details from House of the Old Ways, 47 Wesley St, Camborne TR14 8DR.**PF DEVON & CORNWALL SPRING CONFERENCE***Sat Mar 6th* at Penstowe Manor, Kilkhampton, N.Cornwall Speakers include Miranda Green on Celtic Gods & Goddesses, Teresa Morey on The Moon & Robert Wallace on Sacred Sites. Details: PO Box 314, Exeter, Devon EX4 6YR**BELTANE CELEBRATIONS***Fri Apr 30th* - 16th Annual Maypole Dance & feast at Carn Bosavern, St.Just 6.30pm. Details 01736-787186*Sat May 1st* - Obby Oss Day at Padstow. Details: 01841-533449*Sun May 2nd* - Pagan Moot Celebrations. Details: 01736-787522*Sat May 8th* - Helston Flora Day + Hal-an-Tow. Details: 01326-565431*Sun May 9th* - 16th Annual Three Wells Walk. Details 01736-787186**EARTH, HEALTH & MYSTIC****FAYRE** *Sat 1st & Sun 2nd May* Workshops & talks at St.John's Hall, Alverton St, Penzance website: [www.mysticfayre.co.uk](http://www.mysticfayre.co.uk)



## news page

Summer 2003 saw the 5th Annual **Trencrom Hill Lammas Picnic** on August 3rd, which this year was followed later in the afternoon by the Pagan Moot Lammas ritual (see opposite). Some people came for one, some for the other and some stayed for both, but there were fewer numbers than usual at the CEMG gathering. However, the Summer activities finished in grand style with a walk by Rory Te'Tigo **Sacred Landscape, Holy Waters** on Sunday Sept 7th, which attracted a good number of people, despite it being one of the few overcast and showery days in the glorious summer of 2003. Rory took the group to Chapel Carn Brea, Bartinney & Carn Euny wells in a good walk across the ancient landscape of West Penwith.

The 14th year of the Autumn series of talks began on Sept 25th with a rather special presentation by **Julie Walker** who travelled over from the Isle of Man to give a talk on "Manx Island Essences: a way of connecting with the land". This was a multi-layered session, in which Julie laid out a large map of the island on the floor and told the audience about how she was guided to go to different sacred places there to find water and make the essences. She showed large pictures of the places, chanted their names and then invited people to walk the map in a guided pilgrimage to discover the essences for themselves, whilst she sang traditional Manx songs as an accompaniment. It was a deeply earth-connected evening, and a fascinating insight into her journey.

On Oct 30th, the evening before Samhain eve, **Michèle Brown** gave a presentation to a full house on "Shamanic Practices". Michèle trained with a Peruvian shaman, and has followed the shamanic path now for some years. It was a compelling evening, consisting of talk, drumming, journeying, chanting and discussion. Michèle spoke of the origins of shamanism, and how it is used for very practical purposes to do with healing and justice. She also talked of connecting with the spirits and the ancestors, and the differences between the local spirits in different places, such as South America, Europe and Cornwall. It gave the audience much food for thought and spirit.

Finally on Nov 27th there was a slide presentation on "Sacred Ireland" with **Geraldine Andrew & Cheryl Straffon**. Geraldine and Cheryl took the audience on a journey around Ireland and her five provinces, from the south-east through the Boyne Valley (Newgrange and Loughcrew) and into the north, visiting stone circles, dolmens, and wells. After the break, the journey turned south to sites of the Goddess, such as the cave at Rathcroghan and the Beara stone in Co.Cork. Some of the beautiful stone circles in the Beara Peninsula were explored, and the circuit was completed, returning to the south-east and farewell. It was a geographical, mythological and sacred journey through a beautiful and amazing land.