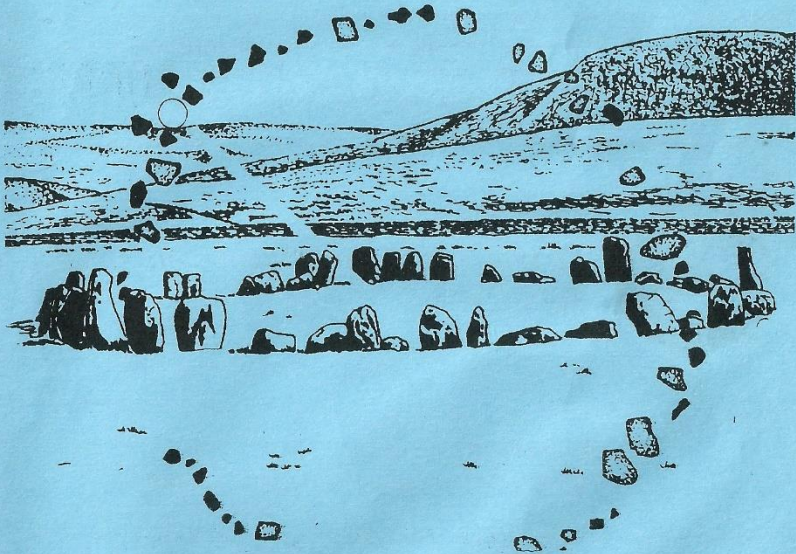


meyn mamvro

ancient stones and sacred sites in cornuall



SPECIAL STONE CIRCLES ISSUE including -
CROWAN BEACON CIRCLE ● MERRY MAIDENS
CIRCLES OF PENWITH & THE BEARA ● 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**

The burning of Tregeseal Stone Circle [see News on p.4] is a classic example of something that could have been prevented. The management of this site has been a long-running sore for the Sacred Sites Committee and the local Pagan Moot. Although a Management Agreement was signed with the land owner Clive Williams in late 2001 for him to maintain the gorse and footpaths to the Circle, nothing had been done since then. The local Pagan Moot had therefore organised several sessions up there with voluntary labour to do the work that the farmer had been paid to do and not done, and, not surprisingly, became increasingly exasperated by this. Sarah Vivian, from the Moot, suggested to the Sacred Sites Committee that the Management Agreement could be terminated with the farmer, and instead given to the Moot to implement, but this was rejected. Eventually, after the issue having been raised at every Sacred Sites Meeting, Ann Preston-Jones spoke to the farmer about it in early 2004, and gave him permission to burn the gorse. This would not have been necessary had it been cut back regularly over the previous 2 years, but at least something was now happening.

Although burning gorse is a tried and tested method of clearing it back, the area being burnt was a relatively small area close to the Circle. There should thus have been many safeguards in place to ensure that the Circle was protected. There were none. No fire breaks were set around the circle, and the fire was lit on a very windy evening, so that it very quickly got out of control. It was fortunate that the Cornish hedge nearby impeded its progress, but not before it had badly burned half of the stones in the circle, destroyed all the long-time growing lichen and swept over the wall to burn a wooden fence in a neighbouring farmer's field. Ann Preston-Jones argued that the fire was not as bad as it appeared ("a quick and light burn") and that the Circle wasn't perfect anyway ("part of it was reassembled some years ago from the bottom of tin pits"). But surely that is no excuse for letting the circle become burnt when it could have been prevented? The stones may have been re-erected, but had probably fallen there from the circle: certainly, for the last 20 years there have been 18 or 19 stones standing. In any case, the site is viewed as sacred by many people, and not just any old heap of stones. Even Ann admitted that it was not possible to tell if there had been any damage to the stones, perhaps in hairline cracks not easily visible. Andy Norfolk also commented that this gave a very bad example to all the people we were trying to discourage from lighting fires at ancient sites. The depressing thing is that, despite the close monitoring and protection for this site that was in place, and the existence of the Sacred Sites Committee with all the good dialogue that takes place there, the incident still happened. Will this be a lesson for the future? We'd like to think so, but this doesn't augur well.



news page

The Winter Solstice gathering on Dec 21st 2003 was something of an unexpected event. The walk up to **Chûn Quoit** was presaged by a glorious full rainbow over the Moors, but of course there was as usual no visible sunset alignment over Carn Kenidjack! Afterwards, the **Celtic Storytelling** in St. Just attracted far fewer people than in previous years, although there were some fine stories and tales. But the whole event was curtailed by a power cut at Age Concern that left it without heat or light! All this occurred on the evening of the Dark of the Moon, so it was perhaps not surprising!

January 29th 2004 saw a return to the Acorn in Penzance for the talks and presentations. **Pam Masterson** from "Healing Star" in the town gave a presentation on "The Chakras and Cundalini", a combination of information and a guided meditation. She related the Chakra system and its location in the human body to different elements and planets, and to the energy channels of the body and the Earth. An original talk that brought together the practical and the spiritual, and was much appreciated by all who attended.

The slide presentation on February 26th was by **Paul Bonnington**, a local archaeologist working for the National Trust, who talked all about the first and last hill of "Chapel Carn Brea", a site he knew well that he had recently been looking after and clearing. He attracted a full house and the audience learnt a great deal from Paul's enthusiastic and knowledgeable approach. The talk was based on his article in MM53, with the added plus of some lovely slides, and a friendly interaction with the audience. His open approach to ritual landscape and original ideas about the importance of the Hill and its barrows was a breath of fresh archaeological air.

On March 25th **Steve Gardner** talked about "Approaching the Sacred Site". His asked his audience to think about options: walking to the site and using public transport instead of driving up by car; approaching in silence rather than chattering; leaving behind cameras, guide books, mobile phones, etc; not leaving offerings or paraphernalia behind, and connecting to the essence of the site in a quiet and receptive state. In the second half he took the audience on a guided journey to a holy well, taking a lot of time to experience the approach to the site and a deep connection to the unity of being there. There was much to savour and focus on in his presentation.

Details of the April 29th talk by Howard Balmer on Padstow's Obby Oss and showing of a unique film from the 1950s of the Oss will be given in the next MM.
For details of CEMG's Summer programme see Noticeboard on back page of this MM.

Penwith Pagan Moot



by Sarah Vivian

The Penwith Moot's seasonal celebrations continue to be popular, partly due I think to the variety we achieve, with different locations and different types of activity within the rituals. This is because the rituals are now planned by a larger group which gives a wider range of ideas. Everyone within the Moot is able to come to the planning meetings for each ritual, or not as they choose, with no long term commitment, and the planning meetings are creative, interesting and frequently hilarious!

The **Yule** 2003 celebration was held at Sancreed House, in the main room, and featured a journey through the underworld to find the Sun Child, and bring the Child into the light. The Sun Child was a golden doll, illuminated by a nightlight; in total darkness (other than this light) we carried the Child around the room to lay the child on the altar, which was a large brass tray. As the line of people went past the altar each person gave blessings and welcomes to the Sun Child, and lit another nightlight, until there was a circle of light around the edge of the tray, symbolising the return of the solar light. This circle of light, reflected on the brass tray, in the dark room, was dazzlingly beautiful. There was also the popular, and by now traditional, exchange of small gifts - at the start of the ritual each person put a small wrapped gift into the cauldron for each other, and at the end of the ritual each person took a different surprise present.

Imbolc 2004 was again at Sancreed, but this time in the Conservatory. We were honoured with the presence of Bride herself, in the form of a Moot member most wonderfully attired in a bejewelled white gown and a crown of white flowers. The weather was so wild and elemental, and the mud so very deep, that the Moot decided not to go up to the well for the blessing. So Bride gave her Blessings with water fetched from the well, and various heartfelt prayers and wishes were given for better weather - which must have worked, because by the end of the ritual the wind had died away to a gentle breeze, the rain stopped and the sun came out.

For our **Spring Equinox** ritual the weather again played an interesting part; there were high winds and heavy rain on the days before and after, and in the morning, but for the duration of our afternoon ritual there was beautiful sunshine and our location was well sheltered from the wind. We were fortunate to be given permission to hold our celebration at Trewidden gardens outside Penzance. Trewidden has famous collections of camellias and magnolia trees, as well as multitudes of spring flowers, and was a perfect place to honour the Springtime. We made flower crowns to crown each other with the blessings and joys of spring; we had a silent mediation time, where people went and communed with a flower or tree; and we had a group hug and hum with a particularly beautiful magnolia tree. It was a gentle happy ritual much enjoyed by all. *For details of the monthly Moots and contact details see Noticeboard on back page.*

SACRED SITES NEWS

TREGESAL CIRCLE BURNT

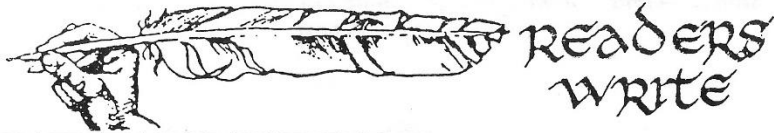
Tregesal Stone Circle near St. Just in West Penwith was badly burnt by a fire in February that was set by a farmer Clive Williams. The farmer had a Management Agreement with the Historic Environment Service to keep the circle pathways clear of gorse, and had been given permission to do a controlled burn by Ann Preston-Jones of the CAU. However, on the night in question, Saturday February 21st, there was a strong wind blowing, and no fire breaks were set around the circle, so the fire quickly got out of control and swept through the circle and over the wall into a neighbouring farmer's field, where it destroyed a wooden fence. There was a storm of protest locally, not least of which because Clive Williams was the Chief Fire Officer at St. Just Fire Station! 'The Cornishman' reported on it in a full-page news item the following week, with a photograph of MM editor Cheryl Traffon inspecting the burnt stones, and quoting her as saying: "The burning of the gorse so close to this ancient site was totally irresponsible. Last Saturday, which was a very windy day, was a stupid time to carry out a controlled burn. The circle is now a terrible mess". Andy Norfolk added his voice to the criticism, saying that he didn't think there was any justification for what happened, but Ann Preston-Jones was quoted as saying that she did not feel that the stones were too badly damaged: "I don't think that the burning has damaged the circle, which isn't perfect anyway, as part of it was reassembled some years ago from the bottom of tin pits. The lichens, gorse and heather will grow back again. In all honesty I don't think the damage is as bad as it might at first look".

BRONZE AGE VILLAGE DISCOVERED ON TRESKO

A Bronze Age village dating back 3500 years has been discovered on the Scilly Isle of Tresco, during the building of a new cricket ground on a field between Glen Cottage and the church in the area of Old Grimsby. The settlement would originally have been in a low-lying area, sheltered by low hills and next to a fresh-water well. The nearest sea in those days was over a mile away - beyond Round Island and Men-a-Vaur. The settlement probably belonged to an extended family - about 30 people or so. Five houses and a possible cist grave were uncovered, together with a considerable number of pottery fragments, as well as both saddle querns and mortars for grinding grain. The settlement is similar in size to that on the island of Nornour, though that later became a Romano-Celtic shrine. However, unlike that settlement which has been preserved for all to visit, this one on Tresco was back-filled with earth again, and no remains are visible. It is hoped that at some future date a full excavation can take place.

ST. RUAN'S WELL WINS CONSERVATION AWARD

The restoration of St. Ruan's Well on the Lizard by the Historic & Environment Service (CAU) together with Grade Ruan Parish Council, has been rewarded with a national silver award by the Green Organisation (National Civic Pride Awards 2004). The well had been a bad state, with frequent flooding, choking gorse and deteriorating stonework, when the HES did a major restoration of the site in the Spring of 2002.



PROTECTION OF ANCIENT SITES

"I have spent some time thinking about your editorial (in MM53) regarding the protection of ancient sites. Whilst there is no really adequate solution, this does not necessarily mean that a partial one would not be worth some effort. It involves some voluntary time and would work something like this: find a person willing to try to get together some people - this initial impulse might well be the hardest part! The volunteers would have to be prepared to spend a couple of hours a week - the more hours the better - at each site to monitor and generally keep an eye on them. The group would obviously have a love of the sites and their protection to start with, so it ought to be a fairly enjoyable use of spare time. Divide the group into pairs: if there were, say, 12 volunteers, then you could choose 12 sites thought to be the most important or vulnerable and plan a weekly interchangeable rota where each couple visits 2 sites. In this way, all 12 sites would be visited at some time during each week, at varying times. Afternoons and weekends are maybe the best times, and especially weekends. In no way should the team be considered, or act as, vigilantes, nor get into arguments or other trouble with any undesirable or suspicious characters at sites. Minor problems could be discussed on site, but in the unfortunate occurrence of anything worse such as vandalism being witnessed then the initiative should be taken of contacting the police and logging car number where possible, or reporting to the site owner at least. A mere presence by volunteers at sites is the important aspect. I have been involved with this sort of voluntary activity myself in a local woodland. So for what it's worth that's my plan. Unfortunately with the times we are living in I cannot see the problems you have outlined going away quickly and they could get worse." *Raymond Cox, Haselowen*

The kind of plan suggested by Ray Cox has been discussed many times over the last few years by the Sacred Sites Group, but deemed to be impractical. Most of us involved in the care for ancient sites in Cornwall are already overstretched in many directions: personally I am a Committee Member of the Cornish Earth Mysteries Group and the Sacred Sites Group, edit "Meyn Mamvro" and "Goddess Alive!", run Meyn Mamvro Publications & Dor Dama Press, write and publish books, do Tour Guiding for various Tour & Pilgrimage Groups, am an active Trustee of West Cornwall Womens Land Trust, and am Library Manager at St. Just Library (in my spare time!). Other local activists, like Andy Norfolk and Sarah Vivian, are in similar situations. Even if a dozen volunteers could be recruited, there is no guarantee they would be at a site when something happened - in fact things would be more likely to happen when they were not there! Because we are all so busy, the Sacred Sites Committee decided to try and get an ASMO (Ancient Sites Management Officer) from Objective 1 Funding, who could oversee a Volunteers Scheme, but the Process grinds on slower than a sloth on sedatives! And, as the Tregeseal fire shows, threats to the sites come from anywhere.

*stone circular * stone circular * stone circular * stone circular*

MAIDEN NAME

by **David Kaiser**



In Cornwall it is not uncommon to find groups of standing stones referred to as Maidens. Most famous is the Merry Maidens stone circle. Moreover, at least five other Cornish sites are known as the Nine Maidens: the stone circles at Boscawen-un, Boskednan, Tregeseal and Wendron, as well as the stone row at St.Columb Major. A single example from Devon, at Belstone, is also called the Nine Maidens. But why 'Maidens'? And why is this appellation restricted to the south-west of England?

There are other prehistoric sites with the name 'Maiden' found all across Britain. However, these are usually large earthworks such as Maiden's Bower in Bedfordshire, and the numerous Maiden Castles, most notably the huge hillfort outside Dorchester. Unlike the megaliths, these Iron Age sites are not primarily ritual in nature but defensive. The name may have originated in the forts' use as a retreat for the women and animals in times of danger.

Many of the Maiden stones are also known by other names; however, they all share a similar story, either recorded or inferred. The stones are petrified women, condemned for dancing on the Sabbath. The folklore motif of dancing stones is attributed to many sites, although it is sometimes unclear whether it refers to petrification for dancing, or if the stones themselves are thought to dance at certain times. Stonehenge, for instance, was first known ambiguously as the Giant's Dance. In Cornwall this dancing tale is also associated with several other sites that are not known to possess Maiden in their titles, like the Trippet Stones circle on Bodmin Moor. The Nine Maidens have also been interpreted as stones marking the graves of nine virgins or nuns. This is also another variant of a recurrent theme, that of megaliths marking a grave.

With the exception of the Merry Maidens, the other sites all refer to nine Maidens. While this number is significant in folklore being three sets of three, and possibly has ritual connotations, it doesn't shed much light on the origin of the name. The closest related example is that of the Nine Ladies in Derbyshire, which likely shares a similar story.



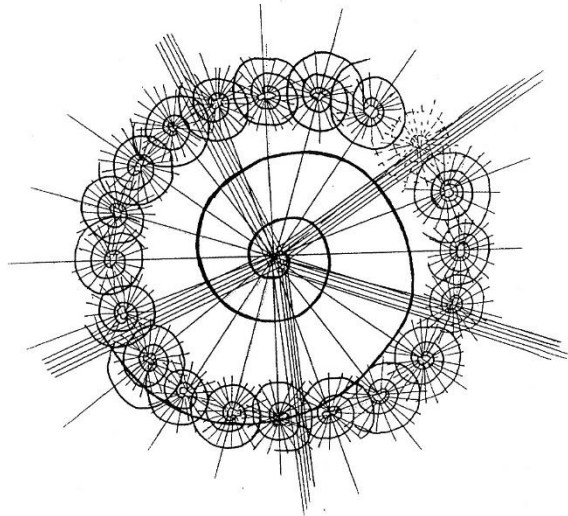
These all seem to be part of a larger tradition of referring to a group of megaliths as having nine stones, regardless of the actual number of stones present at the site. There are numerous examples of sites called Nine Stones all across Britain. The stone circle at Altarnun on Bodmin Moor (*pictured above*) may even have been improperly 'restored' to make the number of stones correspond to the name!

The most common interpretation of the name Maiden being connected to these sites is that of an ancient folk memory of priestesses dancing amongst the stones. This may have been the case, as the story is attached to many other similar sites. However, a more likely although less picturesque possibility presents itself. The name may be derived from *maen* (*meyn*, or *mên*) the Cornish word for stone, as seen in the title of this journal. As the Cornish language became replaced by English, the name could have changed through misunderstanding from the *Maen* to the similar sounding Maiden. The *Naw(nine)Maen* would thus become the Nine Maidens. Or perhaps more likely the name might be a corruption of *Maidn Nun* meaning "moorland stones". A further example may also be seen at the Merry Maidens which are known in Cornish as the *Dawn Maen* (the Dancing Stones). This circle shares the identical tale of petrified maidens with the Tregesal stone rings, another name for which is also the Dancing Stones.

Although the stone row at St.Columb Major was known as the Nine Sisters as far back as the 16th century, the term 'Maiden' was not generally recorded for any of these sites until the mid to late nineteenth century. This later re-christening may be attributed to the Methodists who came to prominence in Cornwall in the latter eighteenth century, their evangelism replacing or altering many traditional beliefs. So while the Nine Stones remain a common term for a group of standing stones throughout Britain, it was only in the south-west that linguistic confusion altered the word *Maen* to Maiden. This new name was then extrapolated into folklore or grafted on to an existing tale. The Maidens may thus be a relatively new addition to the body of folklore surrounding these ancient sites.

HAMISH & CO. AT THE MERRY MAIDENS

The Spirit of the Serpent is the latest project from a team consisting of Hamish Miller and his partner Ba Russell, together with Rupert & Julie Soskin and Jim Lyons. Together they have adopted a multi-faceted approach to investigating earth energy at special sites, and the first fruits of their labour is a 1hr 45min video consisting of interviews with the team, and a pilot for a TV programme centered around the Merry Maidens stone circle in West Cornwall.



This includes a detailed dowsing survey of the circle by Hamish, together with comments by scientist Jim Lyons (whose field is quantum ideas of consciousness) and sensitive psychic Julie Soskin and healer and dowser Ba Russell. The project is very reminiscent of the Dragon Project, co-ordinated by Paul Devereux some years ago, but without the use of magnetometers, geiger counters and ultrasound detectors used by that Project. Indeed I (CS) remember doing a detailed geiger survey of the Merry Maidens then that found an interesting anomaly that, despite the high radiation readings around the outside of the circle, the centre showed a sudden falling away of the readings, making a kind of 'sanctuary' inside the circle. [see MM6 p.7 for more details].

However, to return to the Knights Rose team, what Hamish found was 20 radials coming from each stone as well as spirals at each stone and leading out from the centre (see diagram above). All this was originally detailed in his book *It's Not Too Late* [Penwith Press, 1998], but it is interesting to see it 'in the field' on this Video. Other topics are also touched on; for example, a 30° magnetic anomaly in the north area of the circle, and a measurement of the circle based on Alexander Thom's megalithic yards. Jim Lyons is also interesting on stone circles being built at the crossover of energy lines, and with his ideas on the interaction of geophysical and biophysical effects of these energies on human beings. Although centered on the Merry Maidens, this is much else in this video to engage anyone interested in earth 'energies' and human consciousness. As Hamish says: "We are cosmically connected to everything else in the Universe through these energy lines."

The Spirit of the Serpent video, £13.50 + £1.20 p&p from PO Box 11, Hayle TR27 6YF.

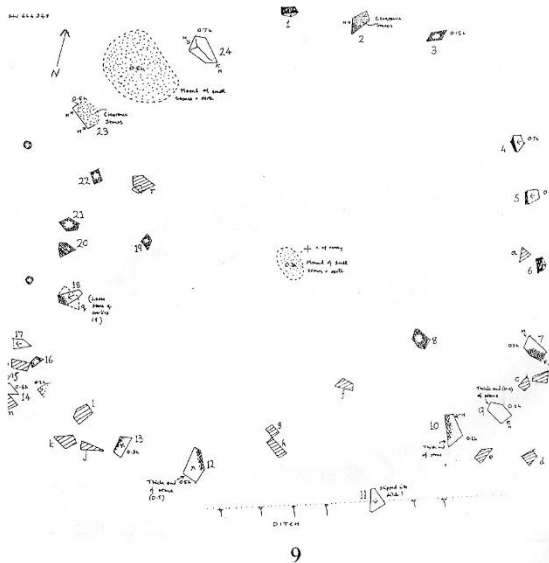
CROWAN BEACON- A RE-DISCOVERED STONE CIRCLE

by Cheryl Straffon & Andy Norfolk

In the Autumn of 2003 we came across a reference to a stone circle in Cornwall that neither of us had known existed! It was listed on the Megalithic Portal Stones internet site at SW 664 348, which, with some synchronicity, turned out to be on the flanks of Crowan Beacon, just up the road from where Andy lives! We started to try and track down the source for the site, and discovered it had been listed in the gazetteer section of Aubrey Burl's recently-revised book on *The Stone Circles of Britain, Ireland & Brittany* [Yale U.P., 2000]. He in turn had got it from John Barnatt's book *The Stone Circles of Britain vol.2* [Oxford, 1989] in which Barnatt said:

"This recently discovered site is ruined in its western half, where stones have been broken up and fragments lie scattered about. The most likely original number of stones is 22 but this could be as high as 25. This uncertainty arises from difficulty of interpretation to the west and south."

Barnatt in turn got his information from Peter Herring of the Cornwall Archaeological Unit (Heritage Environment Service), who also supplied an unpublished plan of the site by Wall & Tryhall [reproduced below]. Andy e-mailed Peter for more information, who said that Mike Wall and Susanne Trythall were a couple living near Camborne who attended an evening class of Peter's and chose Crowan Beacon for some fieldwork, during which they found this possible site.

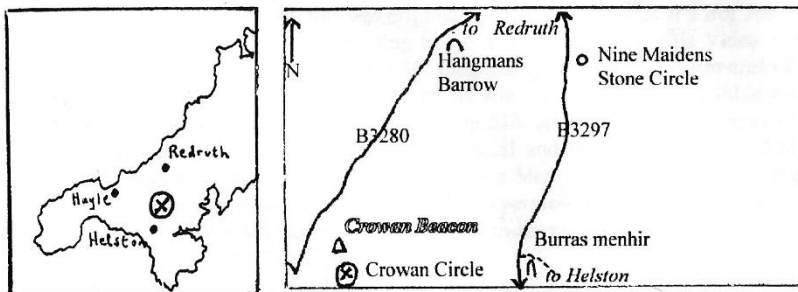


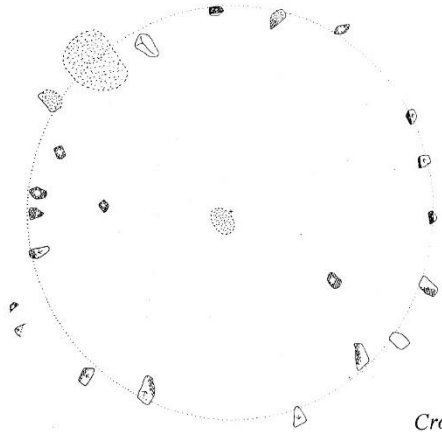


Crowan Beacon circle in Autumn 2003

So we had tracked down the source of references to the circle. All that remained to do was to go and visit the site. So one day in the Autumn when the gorse was low we went to see if there were any visible remains left of the circle. In fact, the site proved to be relatively easy to identify. With the aid of a GPS (Global Positioning Satellite system) we fixed the exact NGR (National Grid Reference) at SW6642 3480, and then explored the circle using Wall & Tryhall's site plan. It was a relatively large circle, with a probable diameter of about 26 metres (85 ft) with 4 stones standing or leaning, and a further 7 or 8 prostrate. We differed in one or two places from the plan as to where we thought the stones lay, but by and large we agreed with it, and with the hypothetical reconstruction attempted by Wall & Tryhall [reproduced on next page]. The only elements we were not convinced about were two 'clearance' cairns identified by Wall & Tryhall on the circle perimeter to the north-west, with a further one at the ring centre, but thick gorse in these places may have obscured any traces. All in all, this is certainly a very possible site, and makes an exciting addition to the list of stone circles in Cornwall.

CEMG will be visiting this site on a field trip on July 4th 2004, as part of Andy Norfolk's 'Even more lesser-known sites of Kerrier'. If you would like to come on this trip please contact Andy on 01209-831519 for more details.



*Crowan Beacon circle*

RECORDED STONE CIRCLES IN CORNWALL

WEST PENWITH - Extant

- Merry Maidens (SW4327 2451)
- Boscawen-ûn (SW4122 2736)
- Tregeseal East (SW3866 3238)
- Nine Maidens (SW4343 3512)
- *Porthmeor (SW4446 3666)
- *Mên-an-Tol (SW4264 3493)

WEST PENWITH - Destroyed

- Tregurnow (SW4375 2455)
- Tregeseal West (SW3861 3237)
- (also called Tregeseal central)
- Boscawen Ros (SW4315 2375)

WEST PENWITH - Possible

- Boleigh (SW4314 2444)
- Tregeseal West (SW3857 3236)
- Trevellow (SW446 261)
- Whitesand Bay (SW363 263)
- Botallack (SW3905 3261)
- Carnyorth (SW3907 3294)
- Rosemergy (SW4170 3634?)
- Tredinnick (SW4426 3489)

MID CORNWALL - Extant

- Wendron SE (SW6831 3653)

MID CORNWALL - Destroyed

- Wendron NW (SW6829 3656)
- *Nine Stones, Caerloggas Downs (SX010 560)

MID-CORNWALL - Possible

- Crowan Beacon (SW6642 3480)
- Higher Carwynnen (SW6520 3723)
- Carleen (SW 7255 1535)
- New Downs (SW701 507)

BODMIN MOOR - Extant

- Trippet Stones (SX1312 7501)
- Stripple Stones (SX1437 7521)
- Leaze (SX1367 7729)
- Stannon (SX1256 8001)
- Fernacre (SX1448 7949)
- Nine Stones, Altarnun (SX2361 7560)
- Goodaver (SX2087 7515)
- The Hurlers (SX2580 7132, SX2582 7139, SX2584 7146)

BODMIN MOOR - Destroyed

- King Arthur's Downs (SX1345 7751 & SX1348 7750)
- Louden Hill/Candra Hill (SX1320 7949)
- Leskernick (SX1881 7961 & SX1858 7992)
- Craddock Moor (SX2486 7183)

BODMIN MOOR - Possible

- Trehudreth Downs (SX126 727)

EAST CORNWALL - Extant

- Duloe (SX2359 5830)

* = *probable site*

CORNWALL'S COLOURFUL SITES

The colour section this time features BEAUTIFUL STONE CIRCLES.



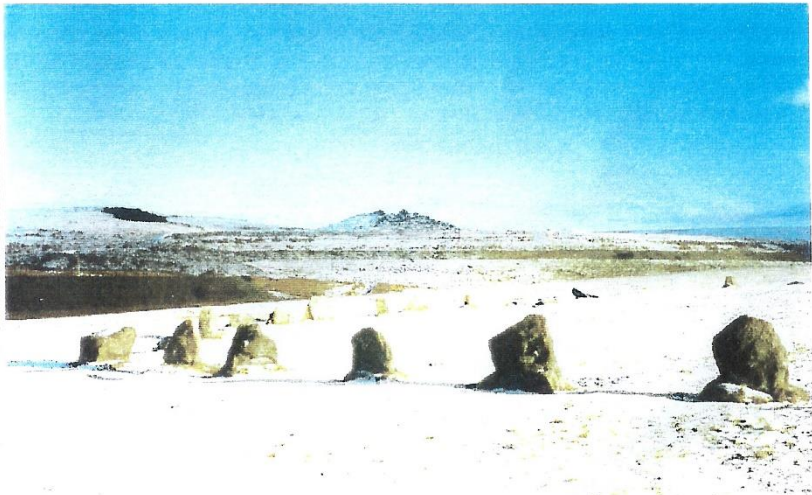
The Nine Maidens at Boskednan on the West Penwith moors



Boscawen-ûn circle with its quartz and central stones



Sheep graze at Duloe circle between Liskeard and Looe in SE Cornwall



Stannon circle on Bodmin Moor in the snow

All photographs [c] Cheryl Traffon

TIN, COPPER AND STONE - STONE CIRCLES IN PENWITH AND THE BEARA

by Cheryl Straffon

Cornwall was one of the primary tin-producing areas in the Bronze Age. Tin is a comparatively rare mineral which was produced geologically in Cornwall by the molten tin oxide lodes being poured into the cracks in the granite (igneous rock) during the Permo-Carboniferous period. Tin would have been a rare and precious metal in the Bronze Age for it was one of the key ingredients in the making of bronze. In all probability, tin was mined at several places in Cornwall, including Kenidjack Castle in West Penwith, and moved along well-established trade routes, such as the Tinner's Way, to natural ports, such as St. Ives Island and St. Michael's Mount, where it was exported to other places.

Together with tin, the other key ingredient in the making of bronze was copper, and the nearest available supply of copper to Cornwall in the Bronze Age would have been the Beara peninsula of western Ireland. This peninsula (one of three jutting out into the Atlantic ocean off the counties of Kerry and Cork) is not dissimilar to West Penwith, although rather larger, being about 30 miles long by 9 miles wide, compared with West Penwith's 15 x 9 miles. It has a large quantity of copper seams, which were extensively mined in the 19th century in the Allihies area, and some of the miners and engineers who worked there were, interestingly, brought over from Cornwall, including the Trenwith and Pascoe men. In the Bronze Age, copper was certainly mined there, and because copper and tin are the two primary ingredients of bronze, the people of the two areas are likely to have known each other (travel by sea being the most direct route), and to have been known about by other tribes and groups elsewhere.

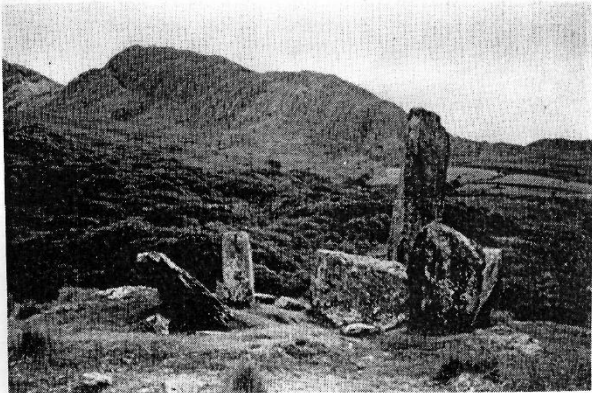


Because of this close link between the two peninsulas, it is interesting to compare the megalithic cultures found on both. Beara has as great a concentration of prehistoric remains as does West Penwith: there are hundreds of standing stones, stone rows, stone circles, cairns, boulder burials and megalithic tombs on the Beara peninsula, which makes it very similar to West Penwith. The two cultures in the late Neolithic and Bronze Ages evidently shared a common cultural identity, though there are interesting regional variations within this paradigm. In this article I would like to take a closer look at the stone circle tradition in both places, and from my researches in the field to see if we can learn anything from the Beara circles compared with the Penwith ones.

The extant circles of the Beara are mainly concentrated along the uplands of the northern hills, often on the flanks of the mountains in very beautiful settings, although there is another concentration of less well-preserved ones in the mountains to the north of Glengarriff on the south of the peninsula. Stone circles are a particular feature of the counties of Cork and Kerry, there being about 100 in all, and Beara is therefore not unique in that respect. The circles of the whole of Cork and Kerry show a number of similarities, and are a remarkably homogenous group, though there are interesting local differences, and they are again very different in a number of respects from the Cornish and West Penwith sites.

One of the first differences to note is that the Beara circles are generally smaller than their Penwith counterparts. All the Penwith circles - Merry Maidens, Boscawen-ûn, Boskednan Nine Maidens, Tregeseal and the Mén-an-Tol circle - probably originally had 19 stones, which may relate to the metonic cycle of the sun and moon, and/or the 18.6 year lunar cycle. If so, this phenomenon does not appear to have been significant in the same way for the Beara circle builders.

The circles of Beara (and Cork-Kerry as a whole) fall into two categories: five-stone circles and multiple stone circles. Examples of the five-stone circles occur at **Uragh, Dromgarven, Cashelkeelty East** and **Currakeal**, and there are about 55 in total for the whole of the Cork- Kerry area.



Uragh five-stone circle

They are circular or D shaped, often with an axial stone on the SW section of the perimeter of the circle, standing opposite the entrance. The entrance stones are frequently set with their long axes approaching each other towards the east.

In the case of Cashelkeety East, the entrance stones are formed into a cove that faces the equinoxial sunrise over a low hill to the east of the circle, as if the stones were purposely set to “catch” the first rays of the rising March and September sun.



Cashelkeety East circle

There is nothing similar to this in West Penwith, and the nearest kind of “small” circle in Cornwall is Duloe near Liskeard with its 9 stones [see photo in centre section] though its individual stones are much taller and it has no axial alignments.

The multiple stone circles in Beara do not seem to consist of the same number of stones as do those in West Penwith. **Dereentaggart West** had a possible 13 or 15 original stones; **Ardgroom Outward** had 11; **Cashelkeety West** had 11 or 13; **Shroneberrane** had 13; **Drombohilly** 11 or 13; and **Dromroe** 13. From this it will be seen that there is a significant correlation around 11/13/15 stones, with 5 out of the 6 above-mentioned circles having a possible 13 stones. This may relate to the lunar/solar cycle (13 moons in 12 months), which would provide a link to Penwith’s 19 stone circles.

The multiple stone circles are nearly always circular in outline, and once again often have 2 perimeter stones opposite the axial stone, distinguished by their height, though this is more evident in the Cork-Kerry group as a whole than in the Beara examples.



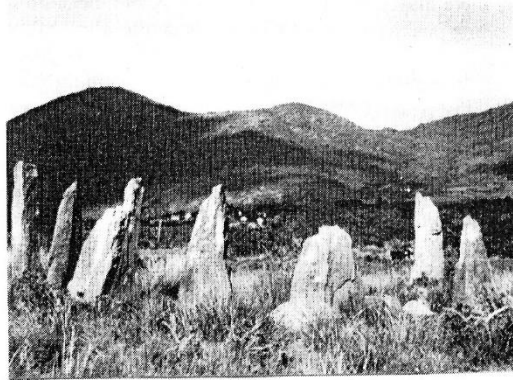
Dereentaggart West circle

However, in addition to this axial orientation, my researches on site at these Beara circles indicate that there was often something more significant going on, for many of the sites are oriented to nearby mountain peaks and/or notches at significant points on the wheel of the year. It is this interest in astronomical landscape alignment that makes them similar to the West Penwith circle builders.

To take a few examples:

Drombohilly circle, which is beautifully positioned on the side of a hill on the north side of the Beara peninsula, has a very obvious equinoctial sunset alignment into a notch on the top of Drombohilly mountain;

Ardgroom Outer circle appears to point in a NW direction (midwinter sunset) to a very distinctive conical shaped hill called Stellig;



Ardgroom Outer circle

Shroneberrane seems to have a NW (midsummer sunset) alignment to a small notch on the mountain Knockanoughanish.



Shroneberrane circle

All these alignments are sunset ones, and there does seem to be a preference amongst the Beara circle builders for sunset observations rather than sunrise ones. This is confirmed by local researcher Jack Roberts: "The common orientation of the circles is towards the W or SW and therefore towards setting positions of the sun or moon".¹

The West Penwith circle builders seemed to favour both sunrise and sunset positions. The Tregeseal circle is in alignment to the Beltane sunrise over Boswens menhir; the outlier to the Nine Maidens (Boskednan) points to the midsummer sunset, and the circle seems aligned to the distinctive hilltop of Carn Gulva [*see photo in centre section*] similar to that of Ardroom Outward; Boscawen-ûn has a possible Imbolc/Samhain sunset alignment from the centre stone over the quartz stone [*see photo in centre section*]; and the Merry Maidens may have had various Beltane sunrise and Imbolc/Samhain sunset alignments over (now destroyed) neighbouring tumuli and circles. If we bear in mind that some circles and outlying stones have been lost over the years, there may originally have been a whole megalithic complex built around rising and setting positions at the major points on the wheel of the year.

In the Beara circles, there were also standing stones present, sometimes nearby, such as **Ardroom Outward**, and sometimes right next to the circle, such as at **Uragh**. In some circles there was a standing stone and/or a burial in the centre of the circle, such as the Boulder Dolmen and small standing stone in the centre of **Dromroc**. One of the West Penwith sites, Boscawen-ûn, has of course a fine standing stone in its centre [*see photo in centre section*]; and it has been suggested² that the centre stones of Cornish sites were the original model for the smaller centre standing stones of the Cork-Kerry group. If so, this would imply contact between the peoples of Penwith and those of Cork-Kerry/Beara, which brings us “full circle” back to my original suggestion that they were linked by the tin and copper trades.

This theory is given some validity by Irish archaeologist Dr. Seán O’Nualláin, who has observed³ that there is a greater concentration of circles in the copper deposit areas of Beara than elsewhere in the peninsula. “Given that the Mount Gabriel mines in County Cork were in use between 1700-1300 BCE, it is possible that the builders of these monuments had an interest in the copper.” He goes on to point out that the presence of some quartz menhirs within some stone circles may suggest this to be so, for quartz is an indication of some forms of copper, and, I would add to that, tin as well. The quartz stone at Boscawen-ûn stone circle may well be significant in this respect. “If, as seems likely, prehistoric copper (and tin)-seeking peoples were aware of this association, it may well explain the special status accorded to these quartz stones.

The quartz stones then may well have had a sacred significance to the circle builders, who, in the Beara peninsula, were mining for copper, and who, in the Penwith peninsula, were mining for tin, which together made the precious bronze, so central to the culture of these people. Stone, tin and copper were all of great importance to these megalithic peoples, and their circles were perhaps built in their different ways as a thanksgiving to the earth and sun deities for providing them with their wealth.

¹ “The Stone Circles of Cork and Kerry: an astronomical guide” Jack Roberts (Bandia 1996)

² “The Stone Circles of Britain, Ireland and Brittany” Aubrey Burl (Yale 2000) p.262-3

³ “Stone Circles in Ireland” - Seán O’ Nualláin (County House, 1995)



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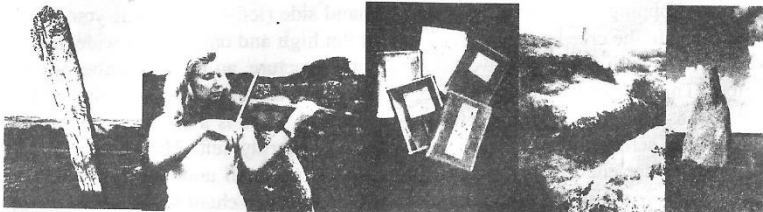
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MY FAVOURITE FUGGY HOLES

3: BOLEIGH FOGOU

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 third of these features, I visit one of the most special sites - Boleigh fogou.

Until quite recently, the house nearby was run as CAER alternative centre by Jo May, and many people visited the fogou while they were attending courses there. Consequently, the energies inside the fogou were often quite disturbed and mixed up, and Jo himself sometimes had to do a 'psychic cleaning' of the site. Nevertheless, it was always a powerful experience to visit the fogou, if not always a calm or settled one. I would approach the site down the long drive, and call at the House to check with Jo that it was OK to visit. Then I would walk around the side of the house, past the caravan and follow an almost hidden pathway that suddenly brought me to the very mouth of the fogou itself. Sometimes there would be flowers or other offerings at the entrance, and I always took a deep breath and asked the ancestors or spirits of the place for permission to enter before I plunged steeply and deeply into the Underworld of the fogou.

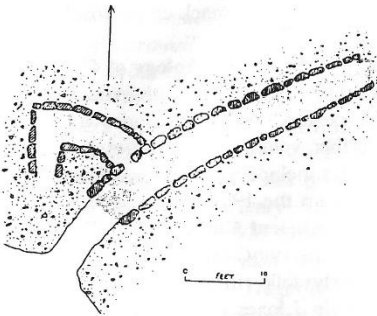
Because the passage led so sharply down, it became dark very quickly inside, and the view through the entrance to the outside seemed very much like looking back up at the Upperworld. Once inside, I would feel my way along the long passage until I came to the end some 36ft further on. Often the far end was very water-logged and the splash of my boots through the water felt like a connection with the life force of Mother Earth. Sometimes in the niches and crannies of the fogou were the remains of candles, lit during some ritual, and it was comforting to re-light these to create a more welcoming atmosphere. Sometimes at the end of the fogou, offerings had been left, and the whole place felt like an active and well-used ceremonial centre.

I would then make my way back along the passage towards the entrance again, only this time stopping and feeling on the right-hand side (left-hand side as you go in) the low entrance to the creep passage. At about 2ft 9in high and only 1ft 3in wide, this is a difficult entrance into the most powerful part of the structure, an inner chamber within the chamber. This is a hands and knees job, as you crawl the 12ft or so into pitch black darkness. Just as you think you are getting near the end, there is a blocking stone over which you must scramble, before the passage turns sharply left. Here is the inner chamber of the inner chamber of the chamber, a place so small and womb-like that it calls out to you to rest a while in the darkness and meditate or chant to the ancestors of this place, for their presence is very strong and omnipresent here. This Creep was the original entrance, so crawling in this way must have been a powerful initiatory experience.

Many people have experienced psychic phenomena in this fogou, visions and anomalous pin-pricks of light that Jo has described as a "star soup". He has also spoken of people being "called" to the fogou for grieving or to experience waves of peace and comfort and the stilling of inner turmoil.



My experiences here have been of a spiritual nature. I was here once with a women's group, and the gentle chanting that started spontaneously and rose and fell like a wave of energy through the fogou was one of the most beautiful sounds I have ever heard. I crept out of the fogou and listened to it from outside, and it seemed like the Earth Mother herself was singing in a deep and peaceful way that transcended everyday reality and took me to places of inner peace and calm, the like I have rarely experienced in my life. But usually I have been down there by myself, listening only to my heartbeat and the heartbeat of the Earth. It is during these times that strange thoughts come into my head, and I am often led to face challenging aspects of my life, or gain new insights into difficult problems or blocked energies. The fogou seems to be alive in a way that I cannot really explain, and to interact directly with whoever is inside.



When I am ready, I say goodbye to the fogou, crawl out of the inner creep passage and back up the entrance to the Outside world. I always feel changed by my experiences down there. I am reminded of the story, recounted by Robert Hunt, in which Squire Lovell chases a hare down into the fogou and there meets a coven of witches. This I can quite believe, for when I leave this ancient and powerful site, it seems that the world of witches and spirits are still all around me, and the Celtic Otherworld only a fogou entrance away.

The new owners of the house, Mr & Mrs Shaw, are still intending to allow visitors to visit the fogou but ask that they should telephone first (01736-810530). They are also planning to do B & B in the house, and self-catering in the cottage. [Ed.]

BOOK NEWS & REVIEWS

Crosses and Churchyard Paths in the Land's End Peninsula Vol 7: Lelant, St.Ives & Towednack by Ian McNeil Cooke (Mên-an-Tol Studio, 2003, £16.95 inc. postage) is the penultimate volume in the 8-part series. As is usual with this series, the research is detailed and reliable, though it being Ian, it is not long (p.14) before we are into "phallic-looking" crosses, with more of the same to follow! There is interesting material on the first Christian establishment in the area, not much now known about, of the Chapel of Saint Anta or Ainger, located on Black Rock at the mouth of the Hayle river; and revealing material about how the Lelant crosses were vandalised and deliberately disfigured with paint - in the 19th century! Plus ça change!

The same parish, Lelant (originally *Euny Lanaunt*), was the centre of the cult of St.Euny, who is featured in **Saint Euny: His Cult and Holy Well**, a reprint of a 1930s publication by Rev. Gilbert H.Doble (Oakmagic Publications, 2003, £3.50). This is a useful booklet that reveals some facts and legends about the early Christian saint, who gave his name to at least three holy wells in the west Cornwall. These include Chapel Euny near Sancreed, which is also featured, together with a plan of the well-Chapel (now vanished) from a 1778 estate map and a drawing by J.T.Blight in 1865.

Across the peninsula, **Miracles at St.Michael's Mount, & Breage in the 18th Century** by Rev. Gilbert H.Doble (Oakmagic Publications, 2002 £3.95) is a reprint of two rare monographs, first published privately by the author in 1931. The first piece is a short (5 page) copy of an original post-13thC manuscript (together with translation by Doble) found at Mont St.Michel, to which the Cornish Mount belonged from the 11th-15th centuries. It gives details of the cure of three woman and a man from blindness and muteness by a vision of Michael at the Mount in 1262. The rest of the booklet gives details of charges and fines levied on the parishoners of Breage in the 18thC, where there were apparently many illegitimate children and "a good deal of immorality". It must have been all those phallic crosses in Towednack up the road!!

Oakmagic have also issued Volume 3 of the **Popular Mythology of Cornwall** series on "Giants and Ghosts" (Oakmagic Publications, 2003 £5.50) with extracts from Hunt and Bottrell's works from the late 19th century. It also includes a useful pen-portrait of 'The Amazing Mr.Bottrell'. A further volume of the series is due to follow later in 2004. Other new 2004 Oakmagic titles include **Superstitious Cornwall**, (£3.95) a diverse collection of superstitions taken from the 19thC *Cornish Magazine*, including winter solstice rituals from Cornwall; and **Ancient Curiosities of Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly** by Robert Heath (£3.95), a rare 19thC travellers account of a journey that includes fascinating insights into early folk rituals including solstice bonfires. Finally, there is an original work by Kelvin I.Jones on **The Wise Woman** (Oakmagic, 2004, £12.95), a unique ground-breaking history of the cunning woman through English & Cornish social history, making a distinction between "witch" and "wise woman". It includes biographies of famous and lesser-known wise women and detailed collections of their spells, charms, cures and divinatory methods. Recommended

CORNISH BOOK PUBLISHERS - NO.2

OAKMAGIC PUBLICATIONS

This is an extraordinarily prolific list of reprints of booklets on folklore and legends of Cornwall, Wales & Scotland as well as reprints of works on ancient sites by antiquarians, many of them difficult or impossible to obtain elsewhere. The list is published by Kelvin I.Jones, formerly of Penzance, but now re-located to Monmouth in Wales, where he continues to find and re-issue booklets on Cornwall, which now number nearly 100 different titles, together with some of his own works.



Amongst the titles, which have been featured & reviewed in previous MMs, are:-

MM31: *Witchcraft in Cornwall* - Kelvin I.Jones; *Cornish Witchcraft- its lore & legends;* *Cornish charms & cures;* *Cornwall's Legend Land;* **MM34:** *Anne Jefferies and the fairies;* *The Cornish Obby Oss-Thurston Peters;* *Paadso's Faery Folk-Enys Tregarthen;* *The Furry Dance;* *Arthur's Lost Land-J.C. Walters;* *Penzance's Customs & Superstitions;* *The Hill and the Circle/Cornwall's Holy Wells/The Cornish Cross* - R.A. Courtney; *Blight's Cornish Crosses;* **MM35:** *Robin Hood in Cornwall;* *Cornish Witches & Cunning Men/Cornish Giants/Cornish Ghosts* - William Bottrell; *Cornish Feasts & Folklore* - Margaret Courtney; *Hawker's tales of Ghosts& Witchcraft;* *King Arthur in Cornwall* - Henry Jenner; *Customs & superstitions of East Cornwall* - J & T Couch; *The Cornish Folklore Handbook* - John Kinsman; **MM36:** *Saint Senan/ (Se)Levan/ St.Nectan, St.Keyne & the children of Brychan* - Canon Doble; *Tristan & Iseult* - H.Jenner & T.Peter; **MM37:** *The Goddess on the Mount* - Kelvin I.Jones **MM38:** *Arthur's Lost Land* - J.C.Walters; *The Story of King Arthur in Cornwall* - L.J.Dickinson; **MM40:** *The Beehive Hut* - Baring Gold; *Antiquities of West Cornwall* - Lach-Szyrma; *Signs, Omens & Charms;* *West Country Hobby Horses* - Herbert W.Kille; *The Hobby Horse: an enigma?* - Kelvin I.Jones; *The Hal-an-Tow* - Kelvin I. Jones; *The Cornish Year* - A.A.Clinnick; *Cornwall's Ancient Stones* - A.C.Dymond; **MM42:** *The Faery Faith of Cornwall* - Evans Wentz; *An Joan the Crone* - Kelvin I.Jones; *St.Michael's Mount* - Joan Wake; *Tintagel Castle* - Henry Jenner; *King Arthur in Cornwall fact file* -W.H.Dickinson; *King Arthur's Country* - F.J.Snell; **MM44:** *White Witches - a study of charmers* - Rosie Mullins; **MM45:** *Devon & Cornwall's Holy Wells* - Robert Hope; *Cornish Saints & Sinners* - J.Henry Harris; *Folklore in the Cornish Language* - R.Morton Nance; *Folk Tales of Cornwall* - Cecil M.Rutley; *The Mên Scryfa & other Cornish antiquities* - Henry Jenner; *The Royal House of Damnonia* - Henry Jenner; **MM46:** *Carn Brea* - Wilkinson; *The Halligye Fogou;* *The Celts in Cornwall* - Henry Jenner; *Hawker's Cornish Witchcraft;* *Civilisation in Britain* - Dexter; *The Stone Circles of Cornwall* - Tregelles; **MM48:** *St.Nectan's Glen* - Kelvin I.Jones; *Occult Cornwall* - Kelvin I.Jones; *The Stone Monuments of Cornwall* - Worth; **MM52:** *Popular Mythology of Cornwall 1:Faeries/2: Witches, Charms & Spells;* **MM54** op.cit.

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The Pipers Tune

Fortean Times 178 (Dec

2003) reported on some preliminary results of the Dragon Project Trust's Dreamwork programme that took place at several sacred sites, including three in Cornwall - Chûn Quoit, Carn Euny fogou and Madron Baptistry. In the article, Paul Devereux, director of the Project, reported on the dreamwork project, whereby volunteers slept at the site and then had their dreams recorded by therapists, who stayed awake with them. At the same time they were asked to keep dream diaries obtained in their homes for comparison.

Paul comments: "Dreams recalled at the sites were frequently complex and riven with discontinuities, as is the way with dreams, and any hopes of neat psychic snapshots of the sites in their ancient heydays somehow time-tunnelling through the volunteers' subconscious minds were soon dashed". Nevertheless some tantalizingly comparable motifs did surface in the dream report database, and the article gives some examples of these. Many of the volunteers also experienced lucid dreams (where normal consciousness switches on inside the dream). 70 volunteers dreamed at the sites, with 35 of these having 103 usable dream site reports, and these were analysed using the Strauch Scale, which contains criteria for identifying 'magical' and 'paranormal' dream elements. 22 volunteers had such elements in their dreams, but 20 also had similar elements in their home dreams. The results were therefore inconclusive, but nevertheless interesting.

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Sun May 2nd - Pagan Moot Celebrations. Details: 01736-787522

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Sun Sept 5th **Holy Wells and Megalithic Sites in St. Austell** with Sandra Hutchings. Meet Penrice School, St. Austell 11am.

For more details tel: Andy 01209-831519 or Cheryl 01736-787612, or www.meynmamvro.co.uk/earth.htm

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EARTH, HEALTH & MYSTIC

FAYRES *Sat-Sun May 1st-2nd & Sat-Sun Aug 7th-8th* St. John's Hall, Penzance 10am onwards. Tel: Karen 01736-330201

SACRED EARTH JOURNEYS at

Eagle's Nest, Zennor. Tel: 01736-791886. *May 7th-9th* (Beltane) *June 18th-20th* (Solstice) *Aug 6th-8th* (Lughnasad) *Sept 17th-19th* (Equinox)

ST. JUST WELLS WALKS with

Rory Te'Tigo. Sundays in *August 8th, 15th, 22nd & 29th*. Details tel: 01736-787872

WOMANSPiRiT RISING - The

Goddess in the Land- A day of talks & slideshows by well-known Goddess artists & writers *Sat May 22nd* Shire House Suite, Bodmin. Includes: Cheryl Traffon ('Sacred Sites of the SW'), Sheila Braun, Jill Smith & Monica Sjöö. Details: 01736-787186.

FRIENDS OF THE WITCHCRAFT MUSEUM

at Boscastle. Regular events, gatherings & talks. Details: House of the Old Ways, 76 Blach Road, Wells, Somerset BA5 2BX

BOOK NEWS & REVIEWS

Crosses and Churchyard Paths in the Land's End Peninsula Vol 7: Lelant, St.Ives & Towednack by Ian McNeil Cooke (Mên-an-Tol Studio, 2003, £16.95 inc. postage) is the penultimate volume in the 8-part series. As is usual with this series, the research is detailed and reliable, though it being Ian, it is not long (p.14) before we are into "phallic-looking" crosses, with more of the same to follow! There is interesting material on the first Christian establishment in the area, not much now known about, of the Chapel of Saint Anta or Ainger, located on Black Rock at the mouth of the Hayle river; and revealing material about how the Lelant crosses were vandalised and deliberately disfigured with paint - in the 19th century! Plus ça change!

The same parish, Lelant (originally *Euny Lanaunt*), was the centre of the cult of St.Euny, who is featured in **Saint Euny: His Cult and Holy Well**, a reprint of a 1930s publication by Rev. Gilbert H.Doble (Oakmagic Publications, 2003, £3.50). This is a useful booklet that reveals some facts and legends about the early Christian saint, who gave his name to at least three holy wells in the west Cornwall. These include Chapel Euny near Sancreed, which is also featured, together with a plan of the well-Chapel (now vanished) from a 1778 estate map and a drawing by J.T.Blight in 1865.

Across the peninsula, **Miracles at St.Michael's Mount, & Breage in the 18th Century** by Rev. Gilbert H.Doble (Oakmagic Publications, 2002 £3.95) is a reprint of two rare monographs, first published privately by the author in 1931. The first piece is a short (5 page) copy of an original post-13thC manuscript (together with translation by Doble) found at Mont St.Michel, to which the Cornish Mount belonged from the 11th-15th centuries. It gives details of the cure of three woman and a man from blindness and muteness by a vision of Michael at the Mount in 1262. The rest of the booklet gives details of charges and fines levied on the parishoners of Breage in the 18thC, where there were apparently many illegitimate children and "a good deal of immorality". It must have been all those phallic crosses in Towednack up the road!!

Oakmagic have also issued Volume 3 of the **Popular Mythology of Cornwall** series on "Giants and Ghosts" (Oakmagic Publications, 2003 £5.50) with extracts from Hunt and Bottrell's works from the late 19th century. It also includes a useful pen-portrait of 'The Amazing Mr.Bottrell'. A further volume of the series is due to follow later in 2004. Other new 2004 Oakmagic titles include **Superstitious Cornwall**, (£3.95) a diverse collection of superstitions taken from the 19thC *Cornish Magazine*, including winter solstice rituals from Cornwall; and **Ancient Curiosities of Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly** by Robert Heath (£3.95), a rare 19thC travellers account of a journey that includes fascinating insights into early folk rituals including solstice bonfires. Finally, there is an original work by Kelvin I.Jones on **The Wise Woman** (Oakmagic, 2004, £12.95), a unique ground-breaking history of the cunning woman through English & Cornish social history, making a distinction between 'witch' and 'wise woman'. It includes biographies of famous and lesser-known wise women and detailed collections of their spells, charms, cures and divinatory methods. Recommended