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meyn mamvro

ancient stones and sacred sites in cornwall



SPECIAL REDISCOVERED STONE CIRCLES ISSUE
REMOTE & ANCIENT PLACES - ALSIA ● DOWSING ●
MISSING MENHIRS ● KYNANCE GATE ● CASPN ●
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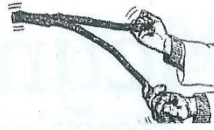
STONES OF OUR MOTHERLAND

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

The row about the grazing of cattle on West Penwith moors continues to rumble on. Radio 4's *Open Country* programme came to see what it was all about. They interviewed Craig Weatherhill, Ian Cooke and Steve Yandall from Save Penwith Moors (SPM), and on the other side Peter Bowden from Natural England (NE), Jon Brookes of the National Trust, and farmer Stephen Bone from Trengwainton Farm. Finally, they interviewed Stephen Warman from NE to try and find a way ahead for both parties. Craig took the presenter to Tregeseal Circle, which he said had been destabilized by the cattle. The moors were described as "a sanctuary and a haven from the modern world" and Ian Cooke said they had a "sacred spiritual quality". Stephen Bone admitted that their reasons for putting up the fences and putting out the cattle were "purely financial" (grants from the EU for the Higher Stewardship Scheme). Stephen Warman said that they didn't want "to impose a view" against the wishes of local people, and he seemed to take on board SPM's suggestion that grazing be removed from the areas where ancient sites lie. SPM says that these four specific areas would only amount to just 1.6% of the land under the scheme, and Stephen Warman promised to talk to all those involved, including landowners and residents to see if this were possible. Whether he can square this difficult circle remains to be seen!

Another controversy has also reared its (horse's) head in 'The Cornishman' newspaper. Two letters to the newspaper, one of which was from Andy Hazelhurst, Director of Golowan & Montol festivals, & Alan Collins, administrator of the Golowan band, claimed that Penglaz, Penzance's obby oss, was not a 'pagan' beast, but was 'purely secular' and a 'civic symbol that holds the same status as the Padstow Obby Oss or the Furry Dance in Helston'. The other letter even claimed that a pagan interpretation of the Oss was a 'fantasy interpretation'. Readers of MM will know that we have run articles on the Obby Oss (MM48 & 69), the Furry Dance (MM48 & 69) & Penglaze (MM42, 65 & 68), in which we have argued that all 3 events very much owe their origins to pagan festivals. So MM editor wrote to the paper, pointing this out, and adding: "Cassandra Latham-Jones, a well-known local pagan, has always from the very beginning led and teased the Oss around the streets of Penzance. Penglaz has a large following among the local pagan community, who are happy to be inclusive about her, but to claim that she is a 'purely secular' beast is a sanitized denial of the ancient pagan symbolism of this powerful Horse Goddess". There were other letters, arguing the case for and against the meaning and 'history' of Penglaz, but the Golowan Two announced that in future the only Penglaz that will be welcome at Golowan will be the 'official' civic one, and the Latham-Jones one will not be allowed.

DOWSING NEWS



Summer 2010 activities continued at the beginning of July 2010 with a **Celtic Dowisers** visit to *St.Nectan's Glen*. Previously visited by CEMG in September 2007 [see *MM65 p.2*] when a large holed stone was found at the bottom of the kieve, no finds were made this time, but the Group had a real feel of the sacredness of this site, and its closeness to the Otherword. Dowsing revealed that there had once indeed been a hermitage above the waterfall, but that there was no trace of any saint ever having been there., which would tie in with what we know about the name of St.Nectan only being given to the place in the 19thC [see *MM72 p.9*]. Larry also thought that the Romans had been to the site for mining some of the tin and copper found in the stream. An afternoon in magical surroundings.

Later in July **Celtic Dowisers** went to *Castle-an-Dinas* near Bodmin, where they found traces of the mining and the underground water courses, and then on to Ed Pryn's megalithic complex at *St.Merryn*. Here the energies, created by the activities around the stones, seemed especially benificent and gently flowing. A return visit is promised in 2011.

In August **West Penwith Dowisers** had a lovely summer's day for their visit to *Sperris & Zennor Quoits*. Sperris proved to be particularly interesting for dowsing, with general agreement that the site had been 'decommissioned' when the nearby Zennor Quoit was built, and the missing capstone from Sperris had been taken away and was now hidden in thick gorse near to Zennor. A walk along the trackway towards Trendrine Hill found some beautiful spirals of energy at some stones near to the house settlement.



West Cornwall Dowisers at Sperris Quoit

Meanwhile, in what turned out to be an almost exact re-run of events in July 1997 when CEMG visited the site [see *MM34 p.2*], three of the Group (inc. MM editor Cheryl Traffon) hived off to Zennor Quoit, where they all three heard the infamous hummadruz sound [see *MM35 p.4-5* & *MM36 p.4-5*] experienced here in 1997 at the same spot. Could this infrasound of very low frequency be site-related under similar conditions? After this, Bart placed some old bones and a crystal in the Quoit to see if the energy field increased, which it did, raising questions about whether the prehistoric peoples deliberately placed disarticulated bones in these chambers to achieve the same effects. Finally, the Group went over to Zennor Hill to see (and rock) the logan stone. Bart observed that they 'felt' the rocking of the stone even when it was not directly visible, and speculated as to whether rocking it could set up an 'earth current' that might be connected to the hummadruz sound.

Later in August, the **Tamar Dowzers** to *Warbstow Bury Hill Fort* for a return visit. 'Hill Fort' is something of a euphemism, as no evidence of any kind of warfare was found. Instead, the Group found crossing water lines, with one attendant earth energy line, at one end of the earthwork; and at the other end, two crossing earth energy lines with a nearby water line. These seemed to have lunar and solar connotations respectively. Their dowsing also led them to examine the 'grave' in the centre of the bury. The oblong mound now looks like something akin to an eroded long barrow, but at one time the top of this mound hosted two or three tall standing stones, in addition to a couple of cairns - the remains of which might still exist, albeit now a few feet underground. It was suggested that with the central mound higher in times gone by, and topped by tall stones, it would have formed an ideal celestial observatory. While the earthworks seemed higher to the south and may have prevented a clear view of the horizon, the Group felt that to the east and the west the all-important rising and setting of the solstice sun and moon may well have been clearly visible through gaps in the circular banks. In addition Alan Neal dowsed the existence of a river flowing deep below the ground; and several alignments were dowsed, going to hill tops and tumuli on the horizon, one of which went to the peak of Brown Willy on Bodmin Moor. A very interesting day, with a lot of informative results.

On the same day **Celtic Dowzers** went to *Luxulyan valley*. They visited the old mining area hidden in the woods, which they found to be quite dead in energy, with little animal or bird activity, attributable perhaps to the geopathic stress there. They also visited the church and holy well, which again had quite artificial energies, perhaps because it had been heavily restored with too much granite - someone's idea of what a well should be rather than the natural energies of a holy well. A day that found some rather disharmonious energies.



St. Cyor's well at Luxulyan

The next scheduled dowsing day by West Cornwall Dowzers at the beginning of September at East Nanjulian barrows was cancelled because of adverse weather conditions, but later that month **Tamar Dowzers** went to *Nanstallon Fort* near Bodmin, one of three Roman forts discovered in Cornwall [see *MM73 p.10*]. The dowzers examined the dimensions of the fort's surrounding bank and ditch, and mapped out the main roads crossing the site. They located the omphalos (sacred centre) at the centre of the fort, which was also found to be the crossing point of the two main energy lines in the area, which were still embellished with a seven ringed earth energy spiral. A small sacred site was also located adjacent to the western gate, together with an energy spiral, which was thought may have been where the soldiers and others left offerings before leaving the safe confines of the fort. The site dowsed as being more a place of commerce and assembly than warfare.



C.A.S.P.N & LAN NEWS ROUND-UP

Cornish Ancient Sites Protection Network



Site clear-ups continued throughout the summer and autumn. CASPN visited *Tregeseal* in August to tidy the circle and see whether the broken NW holed stone could be repaired, which fortunately it can. September saw a return to *Bosulow Trehyllis courtyard houses*, which are becoming overgrown again due to no cattle grazing. Oct & Nov were a return once again to *Mulfra & Bodrifty settlements*, with *Balowall barrow* in Dec completing the year. A full programme for 2011 is available, including a new site, Lesingey Round.

LAN continued with successful clear-ups on the Lizard. In August they cleared a new site, *Roskruge Barton barrow*, which had been overgrown for a number of years. In Sept they returned to *St.Rumon's Church* and cleared both inside and out, and later in the month to *Chynhalls Point cliff castle*; and in Oct & Nov they made a start on the large NE *Drytree barrow*. All these sites will be featured in more detail in the *Uncovering the Lizard* feature in future MMs. A full programme of clear-ups for 2011 can be seen on the web site.

Pathways to the Past 2011 will take place as usual on the weekend of May 28th-29th. Now in its 5th year, this popular weekend of walks and talks among the local sacred sites of West Penwith always attracts a good number of visitors and locals. Amongst the events planned for 2011 are: "Bartinney & Chapel Carn Brea - the hills of fire" (a guided walk with Barry Reilly on Sat morn); "Maidens, mines and moors" (a guided walk with David Giddings across Nine Maidens moors on Sat afternoon); "The Tinnars Way" (an illustrated talk with Paul Bonnington on Sat even); "The Tinnars Way: Mulfra to Bodrifty" (a guided walk with Paul Bonnington on Sun aft); and "Lost and Found" (an informal talk and showing of exhibits by Kernow Search & Recovery Group on Sun even). Full details of times and places to meet can be found on the website [details below]. These events cost a modest £3/event, but to FOCAS members they are completely free. To join FOCAS please see details below.

CORNISH ANCIENT SITES PROTECTION NETWORK [CASP]

CASP Address: Whitewaves, Boscawell Village, Pendeen, Penzance, TR19 7EP

Web site: www.cornishancientsites.com **E-mail:** secretary@cornishancientsites.com

FRIENDS OF CORNWALL'S ANCIENT SITES [FOCAS]

To join FOCAS (£8/year waged- £5 unwaged) tel: FOCAS Administrator Eve Benney 01736-793905 or e-mail focas@cornishancientsites.com, visit CASPN web site for downloadable application form, or write to: 24 Queen Street, St.Just, Penzance TR19 7JW

Adopt-a-Site scheme: e-mail: focas@cornishancientsites.com, or phone 01736-796196

Sites Clear-Ups: Dave Munday 01736-787230 e-mail: dave@cornishancientsites.com

Report damage at sites: Tel: 01736-787186 or 01736-787522

LIZARD ANCIENT SITES NETWORK [LAN] via CASPN address (above)

Adopt-a-Site scheme: e-mail: info@cornishancientsites.com, or phone 01736-787186

Sites Clear-Ups: 01736-787186 e-mail: info@cornishancientsites.com

MISSING MENHIRS - CORNWALL'S LOST STONES

6: Tresidder standing stone

In this feature in MM72 [p.5] we wrote about the missing Selena stones [SW3974 2399] south of St.Buryan, and how dowsing had revealed the remains of one of them in the hedge of the field. Now, local researcher David Cheepen has alerted MM to the former existence of another standing stone, the Tresidder stone, just two fields further west. The field was recorded as 'Long Stone field' on the 1840 tithe map, and both Vivien Russell [*West Penwith Survey, 1971*] and John Barnatt [*Prehistoric Cornwall, 1982*] calculated it at approx. SW3942 2406, in a field near to Tresidder farm. MM visited the site, and dowsing revealed that there had indeed been a Bronze Age menhir in the field, but it had been broken up in the late 19th century, removed from the field, and the pieces were now incorporated into Tresidder farm. It is sad to think that a stone that had stood there for 4000-5000 years was wantonly destroyed less than a couple of centuries ago.

But it is more than just the loss of the stone that is important. David Cheepen also calculated that this stone was on a significant ley line, and marked the western end of a ley that ran all the way through a further 7 points eastwards to Lamorna. The next point on it would have been the markstone north of the Treverven menhir at 4068 2438, mentioned in the piece in MM72 p.5. From here it ran eastwards to Gûn Rith standing stone at 4294 2448, and on through a holed stone (the remains of which can be found on the ground at 4315 2450), to the Merry Maidens stone circle at 4327 2451. It then travelled straight up through the centre of the Maidens and exited through the entrance gap in the NE quadrant of the circle, before travelling on to a prominent stone in the corner of a hedge at 4343 2452. Continuing eastwards, it ran through the Tregurnow stone circle (now destroyed) at 4375 2455, before finally coming to a halt at what is now Borah farmhouse. Borah is a Cornish name (from Bos-wra) which means "the place of the witch", and there may be a memory here of a 'via sacra' or sacred way walked by ancient peoples as part of a ceremony in the land. This notion is strengthened by the observation of Sir Norman Lockyer, the Astronomer Royal at the beginning of the 20th century, who said that the appearance of the Pleiades star system above the circle, when viewed from Gûn Rith at the end of April in 1960 BCE would have warned of the rising sun for the festival of Beltane. This ley/alignment/sacred path was clearly of great significance, making it all the more sad that the Tresidder stone at the western end is now destroyed.



Treverven markstone



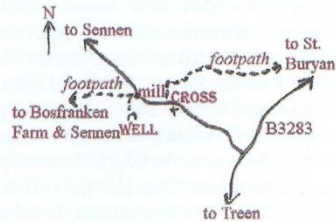
Gûn Rith menhir

REMOTE & ANCIENT PLACES IN WEST PENWITH

by Raymond Cox

7: Lower Alsia

There's an atmosphere of peace and tranquility at Lower Alsia, (pronounced *ale-yer*) in St Buryan parish. This is the site of an old water mill deep in a little valley. It's tucked away in the trees and old hedges on a small lane heading west from the road southwest from St Buryan towards the Penberth valley. The mill was working from somewhere around the middle of the 17th Century and the little valley was always described as a most beautiful corner of St Buryan, especially with its orchards and blossoms. William Bottrell described the scene in the 1850s in his *Traditions and Hearthside Stories of West Cornwall*: "A cottage above the mill so full of every perfumed flowers and herbs, for the use of medicine and for the bees to make honey". It wasn't always so quiet down there. Mary Hocking, recalling her childhood with her sisters says, in *Safari West* (1996) that the valley holds many stories, and she describes the river as "in summer but a trickle, but in winter it would thunder over the mill wheel with an almighty crashing noise over which you could not hear yourself speak, speeding down the race by our feet. Mr Thomas would be in the mill grinding the corn. Inside it was quite silent but for the mild creaking of the cogs and the slither of the bags as they were drawn into place. The difference in sound inside and out was quite unbelievable." The mill wheel was stopped in the 1960s when an electric machine did the work.



Lower Alsia holds two examples of old monuments, a holy well and a cross, which happen to be two fine examples of each type both in appearance and their settings.

ALSIA WAYSIDE CROSS [SW3967 2514]. This cross by an extended churchway path from Sennen to St Buryan is a little way back up the road on the same side as the mill in a little spinney opposite the driveway to Higher Alsia Farm. It is curious that Arthur Langdon, in his *Old Cornish Crosses* (1896), J T Blight in *Ancient Crosses and other Antiquities in the West and East of Cornwall* (1856 & 1858), and Charlès Henderson, (*Antiquities*) (1912-17) all miss out this cross in their listings. It is not easily visible, being a little way off the roadside verge, yet can - at least today - be noticed without veering from the path. They obviously could not have seen it on their travels. It stands against a hedge covered and surrounded by bracken, ivy, ferns, trees and flowers. Just under a metre (2'9") high, it has a Latin cross in relief on both sides. The cross may have come from the location of the holy well, as the Quiller-Couch sisters wrote in 1894 that a cross had previously stood there, and "its socketed pedestal was until lately to be seen." The place is on the extended churchway path which links the churches of St Buryan and Sennen. The scene acquires an absorbent atmosphere of quiet reflection.

Ian McNeil Cooke reported in his book on the crosses and churchway paths of St Buryan parish (*Crosses and Churchway Paths in the Land's End Peninsula - Volume 3: St Buryan*- Men-an-Tol Studio, 2000), that down past the mill there is an unrecorded piece of broken cross base, with "its characteristic rectangular mortice". It is built into the hedge just north of the bridge across the stream and could have come from the cross formerly by the well.

ALSIA WELL [SW3929 2513]

The road climbs from the valley and in a few yards, just past Granary Barns, a steep stile in the tall hedge leads the way to Alsia Well, signed through two fields, the way through the first field being on the churchway path as it heads towards Bosfranken Farm. The well is beautifully tucked away at the lower right corner of the second field which is signed off the path to the left. The setting is quiet and serene. The well is surrounded by a hedge and overseen



by a thorn tree at the rear and a turkey oak overlooking the entrance, where there is an iron gate to keep out animals. It is surrounded by mosses and flowers. The stream flowing under the thick vegetation below proceeds into the Penberth valley.

The legendary history leads us back to the old times at this place, as it was a well of much repute and frequented every May on the first three Wednesdays. It was never known to be dry and children were bathed there in the belief that it would help cure rickets. Maidens would throw in pins and make wishes to marry the man of their choice, but other women of the valley attempted to keep people away from their drinking water and, as it was a cold well cream would be carried to be cooled in hot weather, to be turned into butter. Thomas Quiller-Couch says: "Of a summer's evening scores of maidens might be seen around it eager for their turn to see what sweethearts would be united or parted, which they discovered by the fall of pebbles or pins. As the articles sank near or apart so their future was foretold; and the number of the bubbles raised bespoke the number of years before the happy or unhappy issue could befall. Another method of consulting the spirit of the well was by floating bramble leaves upon it". (M & L Quiller-Couch: *Ancient and Holy Wells of Cornwall*). One cannot help but feel the well's spiritual attraction is likely due to a combination of its setting and its visitations through the centuries.

Lower Alsia is a place of peace - and rather special.

Alignments through Alsia well:

[1] Trevear menhir (former position - 3685 2598) - Barrow (remains - 3887 2530) -

Alsia well - Boscawen-Ros menhirs (4278 2393 / 4281 2394)

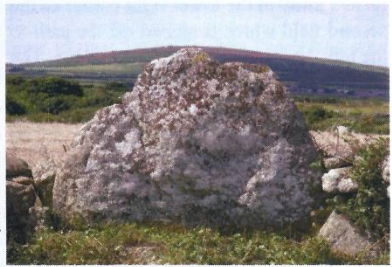
[2] Alsia Well - Banns Farm stone (4010 2638) - Goldherring courtyard house settlement

(412 283) - Newham Farm menhir (4172 2916) - Sancreed well (4178 2928)

LOST AND FOUND - INTO ALIGNMENT

Banns Farm stone [SW4010 2638]

A hitherto unrecorded large stone has been found by MM reader David Cheepen in a field hedge on Banns Farm just north of St.Buryan. It is a free standing stone that appears to be resting on some kind of stone platform, and subsequently incorporated into the Cornish hedge. It is similar in shape and size to the Kerris menhir [4439 2743], and measures 2m (6½ft) high at its highest point and 2.6m (8½ft) wide at its widest point. It has a dramatic backdrop of Chapel Carn Brea, and dowsing revealed that it was on an energy line from the hill through the stone and on to St.Buryan church, with another energy line coming up from Sennen church and through a neighbouring distinctive gatepost stone. It also stands on 2 ley lines: [1] the one from Alsia well given on the previous page & [2] Brea Farm menhir (destroyed) at 3814 2799, to Banns Farm stone, to St.Buryan church at 4090 2570. There may also be other stones on the line not yet identified.



Mayon stone [SW3581 2600]

Another David Cheepen find is a menhir-type standing stone in a field next to a public footpath at Mayon near Sennen. It dowses as a genuine Bronze Age menhir, and is on one of John Michell's ley line alignments (no.42), and now makes 8 points in total on this ley. This runs from the menhir at Sennen [3546 2557], through this Mayon stone, to Tregiffian Veian chambered tomb [3725 2774], to the edge of a tumulus on Deverall Common [4032 3141], to a cross roads (site of a former cross) [4061 3175], to West Lanyon quoit [4231 3379], to a settlement at 428 344, finishing at Nine Maidens (Boskednan) stone circle [4343 3512].



Botrea stone [SW4034 3051] The newly-discovered Botrea stone (*see MM73 p.9*) has been plotted by MM reader Raymond Cox as being on John Michell's alignment (no.6) from: site of a barrow [3906 3260], to Botrea stone, to Boscawen-ûn hedge stone [4174 2770], to Trelew menhir [4217 2693]. This corroborates the genuineness of this stone.

Penwith Pagan Moot



by Eve Benney

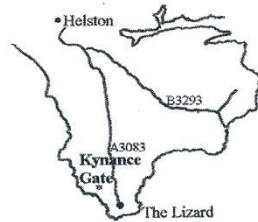
A large group of thirty met on a glorious autumn afternoon at the summit of Chapel Carn Brea to celebrate the **Autumn Equinox**. At the Equinox, night and day, light and dark, are of equal length; it is a time of balance. The Wheel turns, and we move further into the dark of the year. Autumn cloaks the land in glory, and the world prepares for her winter sleep. This year the Moot explored the theme of rebirth and transformation within the story of Demeter and Persephone. Persephone was taken into the Underworld, and the summer of the world ended as Demeter mourned the loss of her daughter. In the ancient story, before Hades returns her to her mother, Persephone eats pomegranate seeds in the Underworld, setting the pattern of the seasons by her yearly return to the Underworld. Being in Britain, we used our own British symbol of transformation, the apple, instead of pomegranates. We sat to hear the ancient story, and then after some time spent in quiet contemplation of the beauty spread around us, we gathered around the large summit barrow and placed our apples in the cist in celebration of our own personal summer harvests and to symbolise our hopes for rebirth. The sun shone in a last echo of summer, as we enjoyed a picnic at the end of our celebration. Next day we took back our apples so as not to disturb this ancient site.

The Wheel of the Year turned further towards the dark, and the Moot met on a wild and windy night to celebrate **Samhain**. This ancient name means Summers End, and the weather was certainly very appropriate! After some torrential rain, the weather cleared and a hardy group of over thirty met at Sancreed to celebrate what is seen in many traditions as the time of the year's death. It is also a time of remembering and honouring our dead, and all of us brought mementoes of our beloved dead. We lit a candle from the central flame to use as a focus to remember them and meditate on their lives and what they had meant to us. At Samhain the Gates of the Underworld stand open. It was thought by many cultures that on this night the dead could return, and that the Shining Ones, the Fey, came from their mounds and walked or rode among us. Although this could mean a joyful communion with the dead, it was also seen as a perilous time for mortals to be abroad. Many customs still contain echoes of these ancient beliefs, but in our modern society the comfort of well-lit and warm homes can separate us from the dark reality experienced by our ancestors. For a brief time the Moot went out into the dark, walked stumbling through the dark and the rain and the wind, and experienced that primeval security of the fire-lit circle. There we shared a symbolic meal with our ancestors, and scryed in the flames for their messages for us. Returning from the dark, we celebrated the birth of the new year in a more modern way, lighting sparklers and enjoying liqueurs and mead.

The Pagan Moot also meets on the second Tuesday each month at the Stella Maris Healing Centre in Penzance (next to the Healing Star shop at the top of Causewayhead). There is a different topic each month and all are welcome. For more details contact Sarah on 01736-787522 or Eve on 01736-793876.

UNCOVERING THE LIZARD

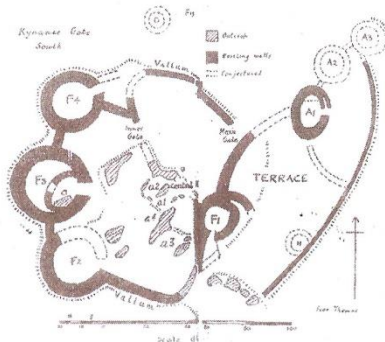
The Lizard peninsula in Cornwall (the most southerly point in Britain) is far less well known than its neighbour West Penwith. It does not have the spectacular stone circles, cromlechs, entrance graves & courtyard houses of West Penwith, but its megalithic charms are more subtle and elusive. In recent years, LAN (Lizard Ancient Sites Network) has been organising clear-ups at various sites on the Lizard, and has uncovered and revealed many fascinating places. This series visits some of these places and shows what has been found.



2: Kynance Gate settlement [SW6875 1392]

Kynance Cove on the western side of the Lizard peninsula attracts many thousands of visitors each year, but very few of them know that inland across the valley on the Lizard Downs lies an extensive and beautifully located prehistoric settlement site, called Kynance Gate. This site was first discovered in 1896 following a heath fire, when some members of the Royal Institute of Cornwall spent an afternoon excavating two hut circles down to 'floor level'. The site was then largely forgotten until the 1950s when a schoolboy found some pottery there. This led Ivor Thomas, then headmaster of Lizard School, to initiate a series of excavations which lasted between 1955 and 1964. The site was subsequently scheduled and further surveyed by the Ordnance Survey in 1973.

Thomas found that there were two groups of hut circles, one now named Kynance Gate south [plan right], consisting of nine circular or oval huts with double faced stone walls infilled with rubble. The huts clustered around a prominent rocky outcrop, which has been interpreted as the ceremonial centre of the settlement. Closer to this rocky outcrop were found small hearths, which were interpreted as workshops where a variety of objects were made, including pots, flints, spindle whorls, glass beads and a broken axe mould.



The second group of hut circles lie to the north of this site, named Kynance Gate north, and consists of at least five free standing huts, each approximately 9 metres in diameter, with walls averaging 0.4 metres high. Approximately 700 metres NE of the settlement is a prominent barrow, 18 metres in diameter and 1.5 metres high. It probably dates from the early Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE), earlier than the settlement itself.

It was concluded that the settlement site was originally occupied in the Bronze Age, abandoned in about 1250 BCE, and then re-built in the Iron Age (500 BCE-100 CE), the Iron Age huts standing on Bronze Age foundations. The prominent rocks in the settlement seem to have been the ceremonial focus for the site, and may have been perceived as the dwelling places for the ancestors or their spirits. The original Bronze Age settlement probably grew up here, because of the existence of these distinctive rocks. Trevisker ware pottery was discovered from this period here (over 3000 pieces of pottery were found) and a large reconstructed middle Bronze Age urn from the site can now be seen in Helston Museum [photo left].



Kynance Gate sacred rocks

Later, when the settlement had been abandoned by the Bronze Age people, the Iron Age (Romano-Celtic) people came here, and possibly recognising it as a place sacred to *their* ancestors, built their own settlement. The settlement was surrounded by a bank and ditch, as if to delineate the boundaries of the site. The climate had deteriorated by this time and it is thought that the settlement was occupied in the summer only by people coming up on to the downs from permanent settlements in more sheltered and fertile parts of the Lizard. While stock grazed the extensive rough pasture of the downs, the people's spare time was spent on spinning, potting, making flint tools and metal artefacts.

LAN have been clearing this site of thick gorse now for the last couple of years and have uncovered a large hut circle to the left of the present-day entrance to the site [F3 on plan], and several more smaller hut circles from this southern site, including A1 on the plan, where Ivor Thomas found 3 beautiful glass beads, one green, one turquoise and one deep violet (also on show in Helston Museum). At huts F3 & A1 they discovered curved walls running outside the hut circles, which had not been documented before. It is hoped that eventually when the southern site has been cleared the very overgrown northern site may be tackled. Only one hut here was ever excavated by Ivor Thomas, and it will be interesting to see what lies beneath the gorse. Kynance Gate still has some secrets to reveal.



LAN Group clearing the large hut circle



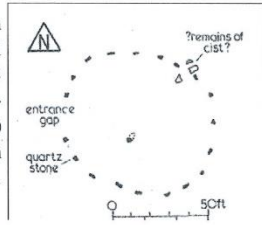
The centre-page feature that focusses on one or two particular sites each time it in depth. As a lead-in to the feature on Rediscovered Stone Circles [p.14-21] this one looks at:

BOSCAWEN-ÛN STONE CIRCLE

This circle is in a very evocative place, being placed in an enclosure hidden amongst fields in the centre of the Penwith peninsula. Two pathways to it are possible, one leading off the A30 through fields, where it appears like a distant vision (with a great view over the site from the rocky outcrop called Creeg Tol on the right hand side of the path); and the other through a sunken lane from Boscawen-ûn farmyard.



The circle was mentioned in the medieval Welsh Triads, where it was given as one of the three principal gorsedds (Druidic meeting-places) in Britain, and in 1928 the revived Gorsedd of the Bards of Cornwall was inaugurated here. It is a fine circle (or to be more accurate, ellipse) consisting of 19 stones (restored), ranging in height from 0.9m (3ft) to 1.4m (4½ft) with an entrance gap to the west. One of the stones on the south-western side is uniquely made of quartz [photo below], although Duloe circle near Looe in east Cornwall has 8 stones of quartz, and there were 5 quartz menhirs on St. Breock Downs near St. Columb Major. Quartz was evidently a sacred stone for ancient peoples, which may have something to do with the piezo-electric charge generated by the quartz crystal; or may be, as the archaeologist Aubrey Burl suggested, because the gleaming white quartz was seen as a reflection or aspect of the Moon Goddess. One of the few stone circles to be excavated in Cornwall, the Hurlers central on Bodmin Moor, was found to have been built on a bed of small quartz crystals, and dowsers have suggested that the same applies to other stone circles.



[c] Craig Weatherhill



There was formerly a stone circle about 1 mile to the SW at Higher Trevorian [4169 2625] - for further details see p.14

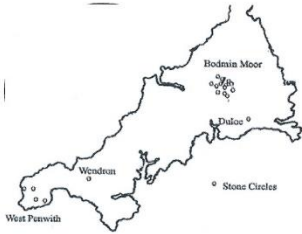
There is also an off-centre leaning stone 2.4m (8ft) high, but it is not known whether this stone was always leaning at this angle or whether it has slipped over the years. It has been at an angle since at least 1796 when Borlase drew it. It points in the direction of the midsummer sunrise, whose first rays illuminate the bottom of the stone and two possible axe heads carved on it [*photo right*]. Axes were important to the Neolithic and Bronze-Age peoples as ritual objects, and Cornish greenstone axes were traded with other tribes in England and elsewhere, so this carving on the centre stone is probably a sacred symbol. There is also another possible **alignment** within the circle. An observer standing on the opposite side of the circle from the centre and quartz stones would see the sun set directly between the two stones at Imbolc and Samhain (early Feb & Nov).



The circle was checked for **radiation** in 1992 by CEMG. The outer stones had high counts (average 18 cpm) compared to a background of 12 cpm. The centre of the circle was lower (12 cpm) but the real surprise was the quartz stone that had much lower readings than the other 18 stones and the centre stone. The circle has also been checked for **ultrasound & compass deflections**: no significant variations were found, but a surveyor for South West Water remarked that he experienced total compass disorientation at the site. It has been extensively dowsed for **energy lines** and many have been found running through and around the circle. Hamish Miller found a strong line (the Mary line) entering the circle at an angle of 13° east of north, and then turning at the base of the centre stone and veering off at an angle of 53° east of north that corresponded with the ridge of the leaning stone. Other lines were also found and Hamish commented that “the impression was of a nerve ganglion ... a nervous system that was alive and functioning irrespective of whether Homo Sapiens comprehended it or not”.

Eight **leys** have been noted crossing the circle:

- [1] From a missing stone at 4031 2719 to the circle, to a stretch of ancient track, to Trenuggo cross [4281 2764], on to Tresvenack menhir [4418 2788].
- [2] From the circle to two (now destroyed) intervisible stones at 4041 2721 & 4031 2719.
- [3] From the circle to a fallen stone [4182 2707], Trelew menhir [4217 2693], Toldavas stone [4266 2671], to Castallack stone [4540 2545]. Imbolc/Samhain (Feb/Nov) sunrise?
- [4] Menhir in a field near the circle [4149 2762], through the circle to a stone at 3978 2594.
- [5] Botrea Barrow [4031 3133] to Courtyard House [4042 3076], Brane cross [4090 2877], Goldherring Courtyard House settlement [4120 2830] to edge of circle, to missing stone [4152 2626], to site of Trevorian cross [4155 2601] to Boskenna Gate cross [4201 2407].
- [6] From the circle to Trevorgans menhir [4047 2614] to St.Levan cross [3820 2236].
- [7] Destroyed Carn Brea stone [3814 2799] to circle, to Redhouse 1 stone [4480 2663] to the site of a lost stone [c4559 2648] to St.Clements Isle off Mousehole.
- [8] From the circle to Newham farm menhir [4172 2916] to Lanyon Quoit [4298 3369] to Nine Maidens circle outlier [4399 3516].



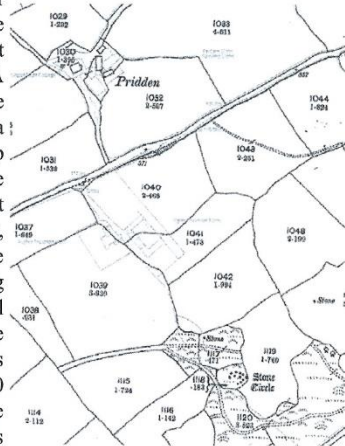
REDISCOVERED STONE CIRCLES OF CORNWALL

This special feature takes a look at some possible obscure stone circles throughout Cornwall that have been suggested either by old maps, or references in antiquarian texts, and/or by modern observation and dowsing techniques.

WEST PENWITH -

Higher Trevorrian Circle [SW4169 2625]

This site lies in the grounds of Higher Trevorrian Hotel (now holiday chalets) about ½ mile north of St. Buryan in West Penwith, on the east side of the B3283 St. Buryan-Penzance road. A circle of eleven inner stones plus one at the entrance was first identified by W.C. Borlase in 1876 as a stone circle, and was shown on the 1887 OS map [right] and on the 1908 one as “(site of) stone circle”. A field name of ‘Longstone’ nearby at SW4152 2626 indicates the site of a missing menhir, and just north of the site, and on the other side of the B3283 road lies the Bronze Age Pridden standing stone [SW4165 2661]. Borlase records the removal in 1840 of several cartloads of black earth from the area, and that there were some old broken pots amongst the earth. Vivienne Russell in 1960 suggested that the site was in fact an Iron Age Round, but as few extant stones were visible by this time, there is not much if any evidence for this.



A previous owner of Higher Trevorrian Hotel, Roger Driver, has told MM that the previous owner to him warned him not to ‘offend’ the pile of stones in the field to the south. “He said that these were from a destroyed stone circle, and that harm would come to anyone who upset the stones (e.g by kicking them).” This is anecdotal, but nevertheless interesting, evidence that there was a notion that the site had been a stone circle at one time, and still held magical powers. It lies less than a mile SE of the more famous Boscawen-ün circle [SW4122 2736].

Redhouse/Trevello [SW4481 2622]. A “stone circle” was described here on Mimmis Carn by Halliwell in 1847, which he says was removed “about 20 years earlier”. Elizabeth Sparrow, who lives at Redhouse, has suggested that stones from the circle can still be seen built into the hedge.

Tregeseal West [SW3861 3237]

There was formerly a second circle, a twin of the existing Tregeseal (East) one, in a field to the west of the extant one. It was first recorded by Borlase in 1796 with 10 uprights and 4 fallen stones remaining, and by Buller in 1842 with 6 uprights remaining. Before 1905 all the remaining stones were cleared and all that remained were 3 uprights and 1 fallen stone incorporated into a wall. Further field clearance occurred in 1961 when more stones were piled against the wall. Original site has been dowsed.



Tregeseal West (Cotton, 1826)

There was also a possible third circle, visible further west at SW3857 3236, the three circles forming a direct east-west line. Visible as a crop mark on 2ndWW aerial photographs, it is much smaller than the other 2 circles and looks more like a cairn circle.

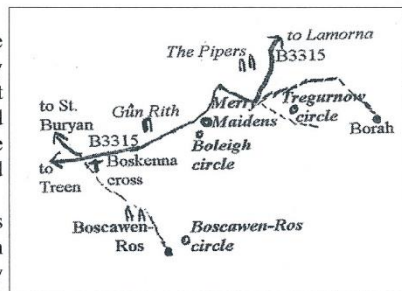
Kenidjack/Truthwall Common [SW3808 3265]. A "site of Stone Circle" was noted here on the 1887 and 1906 OS maps. It lies besides 'Devil's Lane', a trackway leading on to the Common from Nancherrow, outside St. Just, and about ½ mile north of Tregeseal circles. There were also some other 'circles' on the Common and on Carnyorth Common further east, given by Buller in 1842, which are more likely to be field boundaries & cairn circles.

Merry Maidens area

Tregurnow [SW4375 2455]. A circle 400yds E of Merry Maidens, recorded by Borlase in 1740, Halliwell in 1847 & Blight in 1862. There were still stones in the field in the 1970s-80s, but the last 2 of them were broken up mechanically in 2006. A sad end to what was obviously a good circle.

Boleigh [SW4314 2445]. Merry Maidens may also have had a 'twin' circle Boleigh in next field, first told to Lockyer in 1909 by 'the oldest (local) inhabitant'. 4 stones remained, with 3 prostrate, covered in gorse. Crop mark of circle seen in the late 1980s.

Boscawen-Ros. Remains of stone circle listed by Borlase in 18thC, possibly at 4315 2375.



Other possible sites

Tredinnick [SW4426 3489]. About ½ mile SSE of Nine Maidens circle, a "stone circle" was recorded here by Borlase, described as being 'destroyed c1825' by Russell in 1971. However, a "stone circle" at the above NGR was recorded by Henderson in 1914 and described as a 'circular wall'. Now thought to be remains of a possible BA Enclosure.

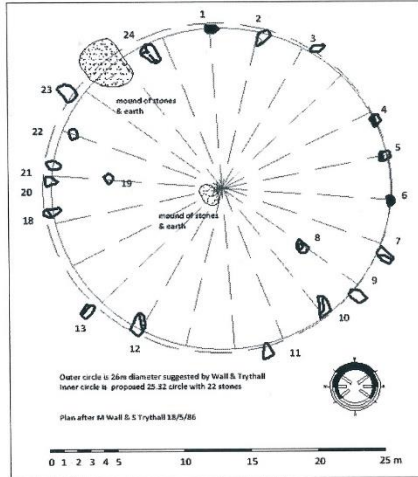
Rosemergy [SW4170 3634]. Field name evidence on 1841 Tithe map suggests a circle. Halliwell in 1847 said no sign of a circle there, but Russell in 1971 said air photographs show crop marks of "stone circle with erect stone in centre, close to farm".

KERRIER AREA

It was long thought that there was only one stone circle in the area - the Nine Maidens (Wendron) circle(s) at SW6831 3653. Now another two have been identified.

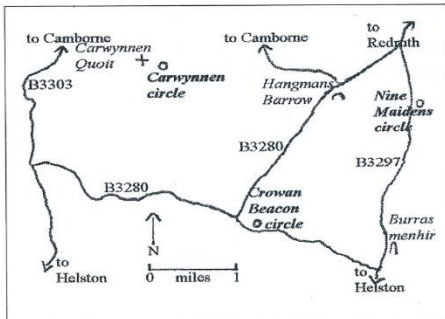
Crowan Beacon circle [SW6642 3480]

Full details of the re-discovery of this circle at the end of the 20thC can be found in MM54 p.9-11. It was first identified by Peter Herring of HES, and subsequently surveyed by Mike Wall & Susanne Trythall. The remains of the circle lie on the flanks of Crowan Beacon, and consist of a circle with a probable diameter of 26 metres (85ft) with 4 stones standing or leaning, and a further 7 or 8 prostrate out of an original 22-24 total. [Plan by Andy Norfolk right]. There is a mound of stones and earth in the centre and also on the NW quadrant that Wall & Trythall suggested were 'clearance' cairns. A most interesting site, that was much bigger than the extant Nine Maidens (16m diameter), and the Higher Carwynnen one [next page].



[right] Remaining stones from Crowan Beacon circle.

[below] Location map for all 3 circles in the area.



Other sites

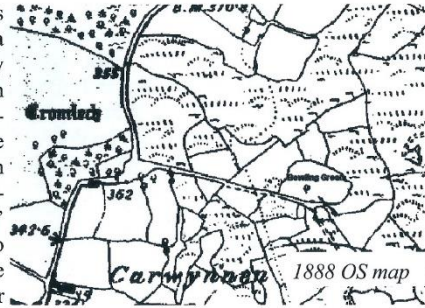
Two other possible 'stone circles' were listed in Cornish Archaeology 11 Parochial check-list for the area:-

Carncress [SW7228 3628] from a field name 'Three Maidens Croft'. No remains have ever been found.

Goonorman [SW7495 3569] A probable ring barrow, illustrated by W.C.Borlase in 1872. No extant remains.

Higher Carwynnen circle [SW6520 3723?]

In 1949 Professor Charles Thomas went to see a site that he had spotted on a map. He had finished 3 years in the army and had started at university, but had been doing fieldwork on a bicycle around Camborne since the age of 8. At the time he wrote a note that he went “to a long uneven croft known still by its Tithe Map Apportionment name ‘The Bowling Green’ A less apt description would be hard to imagine as there is hardly a flat square yard. At the lane end of the croft however stand the remains of a stone circle; some nine or ten stones, forming a rough round of 55 to 60 feet (17-18.5 metres) in diameter”. The name bowling green actually comes from the Cornish “*bowlann grenn*” which means a circular cow pound and the original enclosure with this name was a very roughly circular field. There are other examples of similar small circular fields of the same name. However the hedge on the western side of the cow pound field had been removed at some time before 1908.



Professor Thomas’ observation was published in 1970 in the Parochial Check-Lists of Antiquities in Cornish Archaeology No.9, which gave a grid reference, 6520 3723 and said that the Higher Carwynnen stone circle was in the NW corner of Bowling Green Croft and had been seen in 1950. [By the way this circle was never known as the Hurlers, nor despite what appears on some web sites, were the Hurlers at Minions ever known as Higher Carwynnen.] John Barnatt visited this site at some time before 1982 and the Historic Environment Record says he saw no conclusive evidence for a stone circle. The site was very overgrown and though he found a few small upright stones he concluded that they were part of a dilapidated hedge.

Now there are some problems with this situation. There are no obvious dilapidated hedges at the grid reference in the HER record and none are shown on the 1888 and 1908 OS maps that have since been removed or neglected in this location. Professor Thomas is adamant that the grid reference is wrong and that the circle he saw was in the sub-circular field, Bowling Green. We know that some hedges were removed in this location. The field at the grid reference location was levelled at some time as can be seen on site. Material has been spread at the western side to raise the ground. In about 2001 a new hedge was planted close to the western side of what was Bowling Green. On the Google Earth view for 2001 there is what appears to be a circular feature which would overlap the new fence and which does not therefore seem to be a pattern resulting from mowing or grazing. It’s about the right size for the stone circle Professor Thomas says he saw.

I went to look for this circle some years ago at the given grid reference and found no trace of any upright stones in situ. Last year several people went to look for this circle again. We rummaged through gorse up at where Bowling Green was, looked in hedges and got scraped by brambles and gorse. Did we find any upright stones in situ? No, sadly we didn't. However, near the grid reference there are several large stones in the hedge to the south-east and some tipped into scrub on the edge of the field and by a large tree. Now these cannot be what either Professor Thomas or John Barnatt saw because they are in the wrong location and are too big. Where the grid reference says the circle should be, a circle of about the right dimensions can be dowsed and this circle takes in a couple of stones protruding through the turf. Could this be where the now lost Higher Carwynnen circle used to stand?

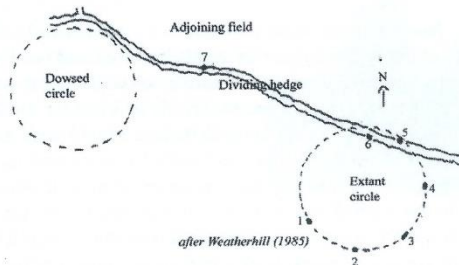
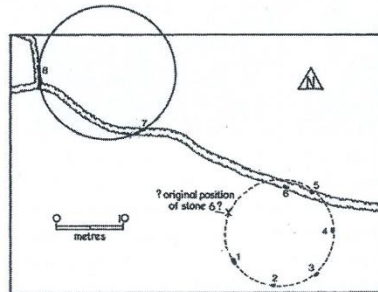
There is a further twist to this tale. On Google Earth in one view there is a distinct circular feature in the location of Bowling Green which appears to be about the right size for the circle Professor Thomas saw in 1949. Perhaps this shadow on an aerial photo is all that remains? The mystery continues...

Andy Norfolk

The second Nine Maidens circle [SW6830 3650?]

The extant stone circle at the Nine Maidens near Wendron (Carmenellis) is well known, but in 1760 a second stone circle to the NW of it was noted by Dr. William Borlase with, at that time, 10 stones, with 2 standing. It would originally have been about 21m (68ft) in diameter, larger than the extant circle at 16m (52ft) in diameter. In 1906 the circle was described as having only 3 stones, all built into the hedges, but now has only 2 (marked as stones 7 & 8 on map [right]). From the position of these, Craig Weatherhill & Andy Norfolk have reconstructed the possible position of this second circle [above right].

However, when the West Cornwall Dowzers visited the site in 2008 they dowsed the location of the other stones in the circle to be further south. This is either the original position of the 2nd circle, or a hitherto undetected 3rd circle.



NORTH CORNWALL

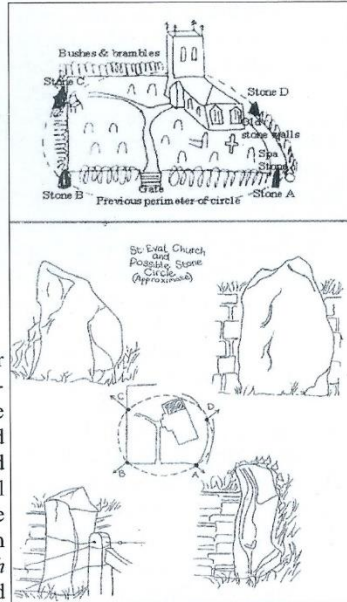
St. Eval churchyard [SW8718 6919]



Churchyard stone C

In 2001, local researcher Howard Balmer discovered that St. Eval Churchyard, near Wadebridge in North Cornwall, stands on the probable site of a Bronze Age stone circle. The Churchyard wall was (and in some sections still is) circular, and it is thought that the church was an early Medieval lan (standing in a circular churchyard). Lans are very often built on earlier prehistoric sites, and in 1913 the Rev. Baring-Gould (in *Lives of the British Saints*) identified a stone in the SE of the churchyard wall (Stone A on the diagram), a 4½ft high stone dressed to fit the line of the wall, which he suggested was part of a stone circle. Later, another 4ft high stone in the SW corner of the churchyard (Stone B on the diagram) was also identified. Howard Balmer went on to uncover two more stones on the putative circle: stone C (in the NW corner) [photo above] and stone D (on the northern side) both of which are 6½ft high. Taken all together, this may well be evidence of an original stone circle here.

Nearby to the site is a recorded Bronze Age menhir, the Airfield stone at SW8715 6802, and further to the east are other menhirs, including the Nine Maidens stone row and the Men Gurtha standing stone [see MM69 p.10-13]. Taken all together, we have an understated megalithic centre in this area, including a stone circle, a stone row, a number of menhirs and a possible cairn.



Airfield menhir

BODMIN MOOR

John Barnatt in an article *Lesser Known Stone Circles in Cornwall* [Cornish Archaeology - 19, 1980] lists a number of newly-identified stone circles on Bodmin Moor, all of which have now been generally accepted. They were included in *The Guide to Cornish Stone Circles* [MM13 p.11-14, 1990] and subsequently in *The Earth Mysteries Guide to Bodmin Moor & North Cornwall* [Meyn Mamvro Publications, 1993].

King Arthurs Downs circles [West - SX1345 7751. East - SX1348 7750]

The western circle is the better preserved of the two, with 8 remaining stones and stumps. Both rings have a diameter of about 23m (75ft) & each ring has an exceptionally large stone to the SSE.

Louden Hill circle [SX1320 7949]

Only one upright (leaning) stone now remains of this circle, together with 4 stumps of stones and 11 or 12 fallen ones. Originally there would have been a probable total of 33-39 stones in a large ring of 45m (145ft) in diameter, making a large circle to rival Stannon & Fernacre circles, which are both visible from this one.

Leskernick circles [North - SX1859 7970. South - SX1881 7961]

Very little now remains of either circle, the stones having been lost or buried, but they originally would have had about 20-22 stones each, and a diameter of 30.4m (100ft). Stannon & Fernacre and Leskernick circles are all on the same equinoxial sunrise/sunset line, either side of Brown Willy hill.

Craddock Moor circle [SX2486 7183]

This circle lies on the south side of the moor NW of the Hurlers. Its 16 fallen stones are all overgrown with vegetation. It probably originally had 27 stones & a diameter of about 39m (127ft). It is similar in size and shape to the central Hurlers circle.

Harpurs Downs circle ? [SX1142 7984]

On a triangle of land that lies beside a minor road leading from St.Breward towards Stannon circle and clay works there is prominent upright stone [*photo right*] that has not been hitherto recorded. Local researcher Alex Langstone has discovered a number of other stones in the immediate vicinity and believes that the site is an unrecognised stone circle. There are 8 visible stones, 1 still standing, 4 clearly visible and 3 partially buried, including a largish fallen stone in the north and a partially buried fallen stone in the south. They seem to form an almost perfect circle with a diameter of 22m (71½ft). The site downs as a genuine late Neolithic/early Bronze Age circle with originally 18 stones.



The site has a clear visual alignment to both Brown Willy (to the east - Equinox sunrise?) and Rough Tor (NE - midsummer sunrise?). [*Photo shows alignment to Rough Tor*]. The site needs to be verified, but is an exciting find.

Westmoorgate circle [SX2025 2073]

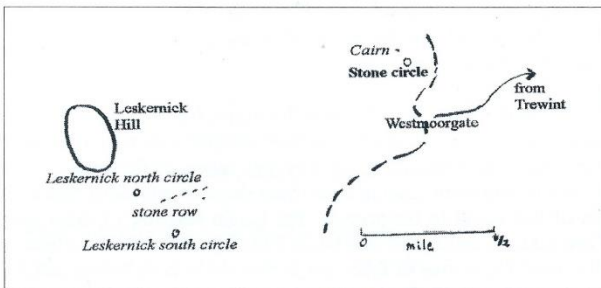
This addition to the stone circle sites on Bodmin Moor was originally found in 2004 by Peter Herring and other archaeologists, and is now revealed for the first time in print in this MM. It lies in a slight depression on West Moor to the NW of Westmoorgate, in a good area for a stone circle with relatively few other stones in vicinity. Stones are fairly even sized (0.9-1.3m or 3-4ft long) and are typical slabs. The slight depression means remains are hidden from general view,



and when standing the stones would not have been visible from very far away. The two Leskernick Hill circles lie about a mile to the SW of the circle, but are not visible from it.

Half the circle survives (from NNE round to SSW). Diameter is 31m (100ft) and the circle appears quite true, but that depends of course on which way the stones fell. All stones are fallen. Seven stones remain, with one mound and one pit, forming the surviving half. The stones are fairly evenly spaced (between 3-4m or 10-13ft apart), which suggests that the surviving part had 14 stones, and the circle 28 stones in total. Probing found seven possible stones on the line of the circle in the other half. There was a small part of a stone in the centre next to a low mound, which could be the possible remains of the splitting of a centre stone. If so, this would be the 4th circle on Bodmin Moor with a centre stone.

Despite its low-lying position in the depression, one can see long distances from the circle. Many landmarks are visible, including the summit of Brown Willy due west (equinox sunset), summits of Roughtor, Little Roughtor,



Showery Tor, Bray Down, Carne Down Brentor, Trewint Tor, Black Rock, High Rock (Kilmar), The Cheesewring, Beacon, and others. Two small nearby cairns are skylined to NNW and NE, due to the circle being in a depression, and a third is visible to E. The circle is therefore part of a typical ritual/ceremonial complex. It has been suggested that the circle was the primary site constructed, and then the cairns were placed to respect it. A very significant addition to the network of stone circles on Bodmin Moor.

EARTH SPIRITS AT STANNON CIRCLE

by **Sandra Hutchings**

I have visited this site on two occasions, accompanied by three other people - the first time was in March 2004, and then again in November. During each of these visits we have all stood inside the the circle and held hands. The first time we did this was in March, the Sunday after the Pagan Conference in Bude. The time of day was late afternoon; the weather conditions were overcast, very cold and very windy. During both these visits I had become aware of Earth Spirits at this particular site. The first time it happened I was totally unprepared for what occurred. The Spirits appeared at the centre where we were all standing holding hands, peering at us in very close range. They varied in heights; some were 5ft tall, the others were only a few inches in height. The stature of the taller spirits was long and thin, and these spirits appeared as if they were jumping up and down, like a jack in the box coming up out of the ground. The other spirits were of a much smaller stature, being that of miniature size people. These spirits were running in and around our feet, so real looking that I mentioned to the others not to move their feet for fear of treading on them. Some of the others could sense these spirits but not see them.

During the second visit, weather conditions were again the same as before, and the time was roughly the same. During this visit we again all held hands inside the circle. This time the Earth Spirits that became visible were much larger. These spirits did not come from within the circle but from the outside of the stones themselves. They came rushing towards us like over-sized bouncers ready to throw us out from the circle where we were standing holding hands.



Seeing these larger spirits becoming visible was a complete shock, due to the suddenness of them appearing, and how quickly they were bearing down towards where we were standing. It was noticeable by my action of flinching at their enormous sizes, and having to stop from running away from them, to remember that they were 'only spirit' and not of this world in the present. The height and size of these spirits was overwhelming. Their sizes dwarfed ours, one being 10ft high, and the other closer to 20ft high - hence the flinching! The stature of these spirits was also very different, both being very round, and in relation to their large bodies they had very much smaller heads. Their bodies had browning to the skin as though someone had smeared earth on them. These spirits again seemed quite inquisitive as to what we were doing there. My immediate reaction was to send out thoughts that we meant them no harm, and they slowed their pace and did not proceed any closer. Again the other persons present could sense but not see - perhaps just as well!

I later spoke to one of the people who was present in March, though not unfortunately in November. They informed me that whilst on a visit to the neighbouring Roughtor (Fernacre) circle, they had become aware of a large spirit there. As this spirit was guarding or looking after that particular site, this person came up with the idea that the spirit may well have come down there from Stannon Circle. Having noticed that the spirits came from outside the circle at Stannon, I thought this could well be a possibility.

In both these experiences, I did not go looking for the spirits, or go with any pre-conceived ideas of what would happen. I have been working psychically over the last seven years, attending a development circle, but I had not reckoned on being able to experience anything of the spirits in the earth realms. So I guess the learning goes on.

A FINAL FOLLY - The Walls of Dobbe circles

In his new book *The Secret Land* [Mythos Press, 2010] Paul Broadhurst refers to The Walls of Dobbe stone circles in the village of Dobwalls in south-east Cornwall [SX2142 6477]. Paul indicates that these are prehistoric, but in fact they are a modern folly. They were so named by Nigel Ayres in his book *The Bodmin Moor Zodiac* [2006] in which (in his own words) he “deliberately misinterpreted arbitrary factors in the landscape to comic effect”. In fact, the three circles (complete with manhole covers in the centre of each!) were put up by the developers of the housing estate where they stand as a playground in the mid 1980s when the estate was built. MM talked to a local resident whose parents had lived there since the estate was built and he confirmed that they had been erected then.



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20 YEARS AGO

Delving into the pages of MM from the past

In 1990 the (then) Cornwall Archaeological Unit surveyed the Mên-an-Tol at the request of the Penwith Peninsula Project, who were co-ordinating a scheme to make safe the holed stone by packing pitch stone around the bottom of it. The results were startling, and changed for ever the way we think about this monument. They were first reported in MM14 (Spring 1991) and a couple of years later issued in a report by Ann Preston-Jones of the CAU (now Historic Environment). What they found, in the words of the Report, “turned the Mên-an-Tol from an enigma into a stone circle”.



The CAU showed that the two upright stones that stand either side of the holed stone formed the arc of a circle, together with a recumbent and an upright stone nearby. If this arc was extended northwards and eastwards it formed a complete circle, and when they investigated, the Unit found four further stones hidden by turf on the circumference of this circle. When it was plotted, it formed a circle of diameter 17-18m (55-58½ ft).

The ‘missing stones’ were then plotted on this reconstruction, and it turned out that there would have originally been 19 stones in the circle, plus the holed stone. Although the circle would have been slightly smaller than others in West Penwith, which all lie in the range 20-30m (65-97½ ft), other circles elsewhere, such as the Nine Maidens at Wendron, are a similar size. Also, a telling feature was the suggestion that there were originally 19 stones in the circle, the same as at other Penwith circles, such as the Merry Maidens near Lamorna, Boscawen-ûn, and probably Tregeseal and Nine Maidens, Boskednan circles.

As so often with new discoveries, this one raised a whole raft of new questions. If this were originally a stone circle, then where did the presence of the holed stone fit in? The Report suggested a couple of possibilities: one was it may have first been used as a rather unusual capstone for a cairn that could have stood at the edge of the circle (now seen as a hump in the ground). Another possibility was that it may originally have stood ‘in situ’ but at right angles to its present orientation, and if so may have been, in the words of the Report “a special stone, a focus for rituals or for observing distant features from the circle”. MM subsequently put this to the test, and found that in 2000-1800BCE, the moon would have risen at the southern major standstill and been framed by the holed stone itself. Pure magic!

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