

FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS

Updates from Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives

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Issue 62

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SAVING ZENNOR QUOIT – OR WHO NEEDS HISTORIC ENGLAND?

Adrian Rodda has combined his love of poetry and archaeology in this intriguing investigation of Zennor Quoit (HER 36098; Scheduled Monument CO33; SW 4687 3801; Zennor parish):

Saving Zennor Quoit or Who Needs Historic England?

Rev William Borlase, vicar of Zennor, saved the quoit from the vandalism of a local farmer. His actions were reported in the *Cornish Telegraph* in 1861 and by a local poet, Charles Taylor Stephens (1797 – 1863) in his long poem, *The Chief of Barat-Anac* in 1862. He was a local postman and wrote as though Rev Borlase's kitchen maid was telling the story.

"A farmer had more bone than brain;

He 'neath the quoit bestowed much pain
 To make a cattle shed.
 In vain men told him he might spare
 Himself a toil, and 'twas said there
 The Piskies made their bed

Till master to the rescue flew,
 And begged the farmer not to do
 That horrid sacrilege.
 Then for a crown the man declared
 The quoit by him should be revered.
 And to the nearest hedge

He fixed his shed: but horse and ass
 Refuse to shelter in that place,
 So now 'tis overgrown
 With rank and noxious weeds,
 And from their buds in clouds the seeds
 All o'er his farm are blown,

To fall with every with'ring brand,
 And render desolate his land
 Who would the quoit defile.

I have long been curious about what traces of the farmer's sacrilege could be seen, so visited again with a tape measure and a camera.

It is a portal dolmen with an anti-chamber and two long wings. The one behind Anna Horigan has six drill marks along its top edge, while the bigger one (south pointing) looks to be untouched.



Photo: Adrian Rodda



Photo: Adrian Rodda

The cowshed against the field hedge has 5 standing supports, one of which is truncated. The two taller ones in the front of the picture have obvious drill holes. We tested if either of them was snapped off the top surface of the portal wing. This was not the case. The wing had 6 drill holes and was 13.5 inches thick, while the supports had 3 visible drill holes each and tapered from 11.5 to 8.5 inches thick. Neither set of drill holes matched the distancing of those on the portal wing. However, they did match each other, so may have been another moorstone used to build the cowshed.



Photo: Adrian Rodda

The south side of the quoit tells an interesting story too. Two drill holes near the top of the support stone are each 3 inches deep and their termini are flat; they do not pierce the stone. The same is true of the one on the leaning capstone. It looks as though the farmer intended to use the long wing of the portal as a wall and extend a roof across, possibly leaning with the capstone. The top holes are difficult to reach, so I wonder if there was more of a remnant mound at the foot of the slab for him to climb on than there is now.

He had not counted on the protection of the piskies in conjunction with the good Reverend.

Text and photos Adrian Rodda

NEWS FROM THE MILESTONE SOCIETY

Ian Thompson of the Milestone Society (<https://www.milestonesociety.co.uk/>) has sent in this round-up of news about historic milestones. Not only is it a fascinating update on these important monuments but it takes us around the county:

Red Post Replica Arms Fitted

The red-painted fingerpost (HER 176673; SS264052; Launcells parish) at Red Post crossroads near Bude was in a sorry state last summer, because the four arms and the finial were stolen. The good news is that the local community raised the funds to have replacement arms and a finial cast at Irons Brothers foundry. The new parts were fitted by Cormac in November 2021, restoring this iconic landmark for all to enjoy. (Photo 1)



Photo 1: Red Post restored SS264052 A3072 Launcells
Photo: Ian Thompson

Pre-turnpike Milestone Re-erected

When a turnpike trust was set up by Act of Parliament, what did it do with pre-turnpike milestones on its road? A pre-turnpike milestone on the Launceston trust's road to Camelford ended up as a gatepost in an orchard. It was returned to its original roadside position on A395, thanks to the generous help of the orchard's owner and Cornwall Council's contractor, Cormac. This is one of four surviving milestones on the pre-turnpike road from Camelford to Launceston. (Photo 2)



Photo 2: Pre-turnpike milestone re-erected SX1712 8770 A395 Tresoke, Davidstow

Photo: Ian Thompson

Milestone at Nansledan

Nansledan is a huge greenfields housing development on the outskirts of Newquay, involving a number of building contractors under the umbrella of the Duchy of Cornwall. A rather small milestone (HER 172728; Listed Building (II) 71110; SW 839 617; Newquay parish) has been surrounded by continual building work for over three years. Fortunately, it was Grade II listed, so its location had to be considered at the planning stage and the new houses, school and shops built without disturbing it. In September 2021 it emerged at last from its protective wrapping of wooden pallets and the Milestone Society was called in to repaint it. (Photo 3 & 4)



Photo 3: SW839 617 A3058 Nansledan, Newquay August 2020
Photo: Ian Thompson



Photo 4: SW839 617 A3058 Nansledan, Newquay September 2021
Photo: Ian Thompson

Liskeard Milestone Set Straight

In 2019, Rosy Hanns surveyed 656 Cornish milestones and reported that 10 were fallen or leaning. In July 2021, the last of the 10 milestones was set straight (HER 172657; Listed Building (II) 382128; SX263655; Liskeard parish). It was in a narrow part of the busy road from Liskeard to Callington and had to wait for other nearby work requiring traffic lights to control the traffic to be scheduled, keeping the cost down.

Cornwall Archaeological Society members are asked to look out for any freshly fallen or leaning milestones this winter. A prompt report sets a repair in motion.

(Photo 5 & 6)



Photo 5: SX263655 A390 Liskeard leaning 2014

Photo: Ian Thompson



Photo 6: SX263655 A390 Liskeard set upright 2021

Photo: Ian Thompson

New Find from an Old Book

Do you pick up old books in charity shops and book sales? The first issue of the Journal of the Trevithick Society was published in 1973. Attached to a splendid article about 'The Redruth to Penzance Turnpike Roads' was a diagram of the 'Old Highway' showing the pre-turnpike milestones surviving in 1973. Checking the diagram with Milestone Society records, we seemed to have missed one milestone. On the diagram it was 'buried in verge'. Locating the missed milestone on the 1907 OS 25" map on the National Library of Scotland website, Ian Thompson set off on his motorbike to try to find it. It wasn't there.

Oh, yes, it was! It had crossed the road and a bridge over a mill stream and now stood between neat privet bushes in front of an old stone cottage. It had lost its original position in road widening many years ago, but was safe now, just twenty yards away. The inscription in raised lettering reads L / 22 and P / 12. Ian had a nice chat to the old gentleman in the cottage, took some measurements and some photographs and rode home. (Photo 7)



Photo 7: Pre-turnpike milestone found SW61543 39679 Riverside, Roseworthy, Camborne

Photo: Ian Thompson

New Roundabout and an Old Milestone

Two Milestone Society members in East Cornwall have been keeping an eye on the new development beside the road from Saltash to Callington. Peter Clements said ‘the intention is to build 1000 buildings - houses, a large nursing & residential home, a health and community centre, a primary school, etc.’ A new roundabout had been constructed within a few yards of a Grade II listed Saltash Turnpike Trust milestone (HER 172746; Listed Building (II) 60413; SX4122 6035; Saltash parish). Pete Goodchild saw that the milestone was in good condition, but had it been moved during the construction work? It seems that it may have been removed for protection during construction work, but was now back in its original position. Well spotted, both of you! (Photo 8 and 9)



Photo 8: SX4122 6035 A388 Carkeel Saltash. Photo Peter Clements 19.12.21
Photo: Ian Thompson



Photo 9: SX4122 6035 A388 Carkeel. Photo Peter Clements 19.12.21

Report: IanThompson, January 2022. Photos 1-7: Ian Thompson. Photos 8-9: Peter Clements.

HERITAGE CRIME AT STOWE'S POUND

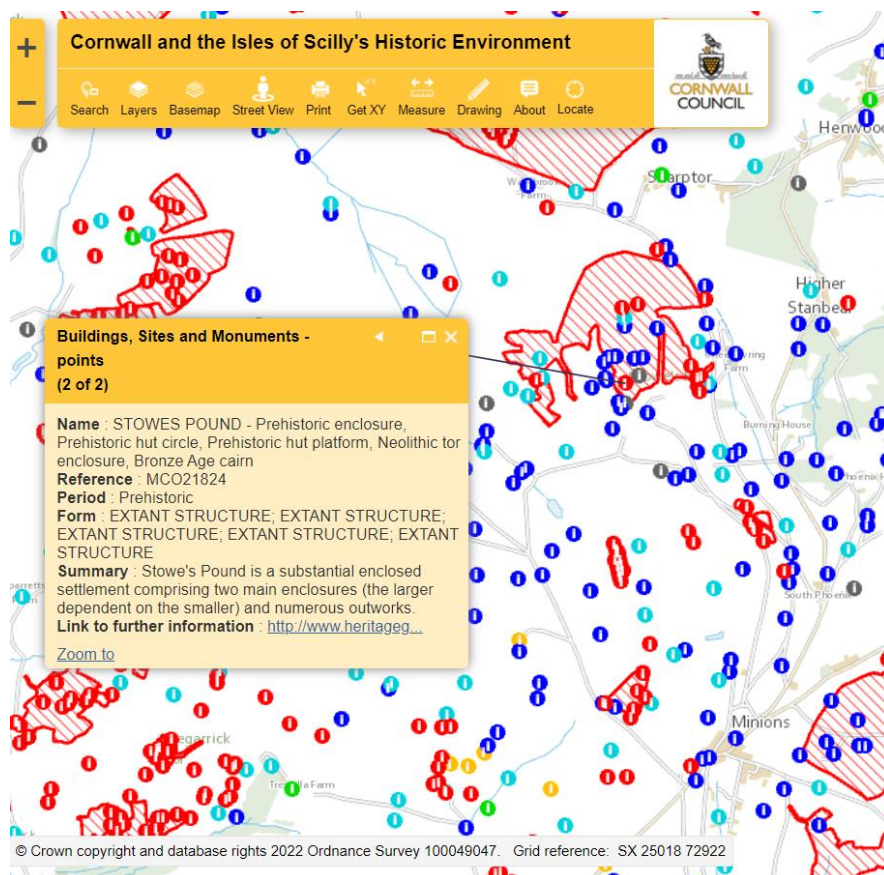
In his recent CAS/Prehistoric Society lecture about Bronze Age metalwork, Dr. Matthew Knight, Senior Curator of Prehistory, National Museums, Scotland emphasised the huge contribution made to archaeology by metal detectorists. And just scrolling through the vast number of finds on the Portable Antiquities Scheme's database shows just how much evidence detectorists have uncovered: <https://finds.org.uk/> . The overwhelming majority of detectorists are responsible enthusiasts who adhere to the code of practice. But a tiny number do not obey the code or even the law. Needless to say, their activities are condemned by responsible detectorists and archaeologists alike. An example of this illegal activity was reported recently at Stowe's Pound, near Minions (HER 1401; Scheduled Monument 15071; SX 2578 7247; Linkinhorne parish).

CAS received a report of a group of men using a metal detector in Stowe's Pound on Friday 21st January 2022. The next day the site was visited and the following photographs of digging were taken.





As the map below shows, this was within the Scheduled area and therefore illegal.



More likely than not, if readers see someone with a metal detector, the person using it will have permission, will know what they are doing and will report any finds to the Finds Liaison Officer so that we are all better informed about local archaeology. But if detecting is seen in a Scheduled area it is illegal and should be reported. Guidance on what to do is available here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/heritage-crime/report/> .

SIGNS OF SPRING

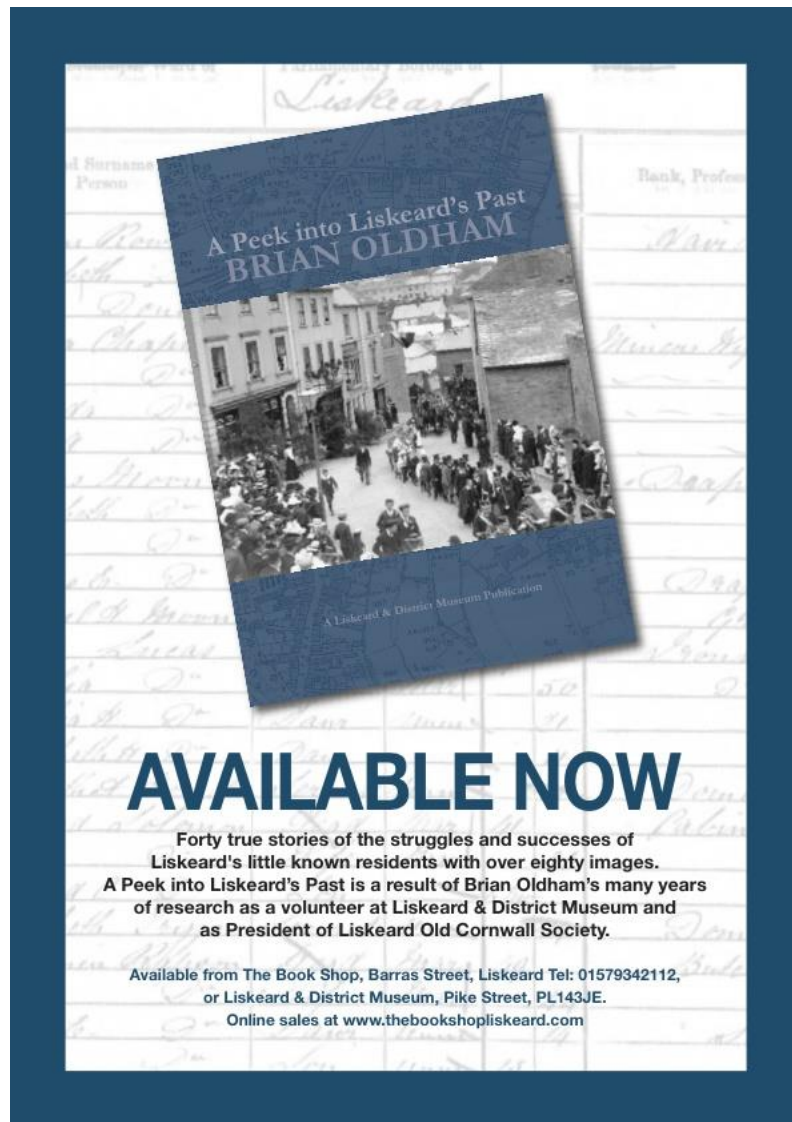
At the time of writing the wind is howling and the cold rain lashes against the window, while the view is grey and murky. But nature moves on, towards the warmer days of spring. Iain Rowe took this picture of snowdrops around Redgate Cross (HER 17260; Scheduled Monument 24253; SX 2277 6858; St Cleer parish) to show that winter's grip is gradually loosening.



Photo: Iain Rowe

FOR YOUR BOOKSHELVES

Brian Oldham (CAS Area Rep and President of Liskeard Old Cornwall Society) is a frequent contributor to this newsletter, as well as a very popular speaker and walks leader. He has put some of his recent research into a book that has just been published. Details of how to obtain what looks like a fascinating read are in the flyer below:



Area Representatives would love to hear from fellow CAS members, and the general public, about any feature of the historic environment in their parishes, whether a new discovery, something causing concern, or even just to answer queries. If you have any concerns, or new information, about any archaeological feature, please contact the Area Representative for the parish. If you do not know who that is, just look at the inside back cover of the latest journal, *Cornish Archaeology* 58, or send an email to arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk.

Roger Smith, 16th February 2022

