

FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS

Updates from Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives

Any opinions or errors in these articles are those of the authors and must not be assumed to be those of Cornwall Archaeological Society.

JUNE 2021

Issue 55

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CONTEMPORARY RITUAL AT THE HURLERS

Here's a tricky matter to ponder. In this country we give legal protection to various sites, monuments and buildings in the form of Scheduling, Listing and other designations. Those which are on accessible land can be visited, studied, and generally enjoyed. But the significance of these special places to visitors varies. For some, the archaeological and historical features are the prime draw; others are more inspired by their aesthetic, visual and artistic qualities; while for more than a few it is a matter of spirituality. And herein lies a conundrum posed by the recent appearance of various 'offerings' on the stone in the middle of the central stone circle at the Hurlers (HER 1402.02; Scheduled Monument 15232; SX 2582 7139, Linkinhorne parish).



Photo: Iain Rowe

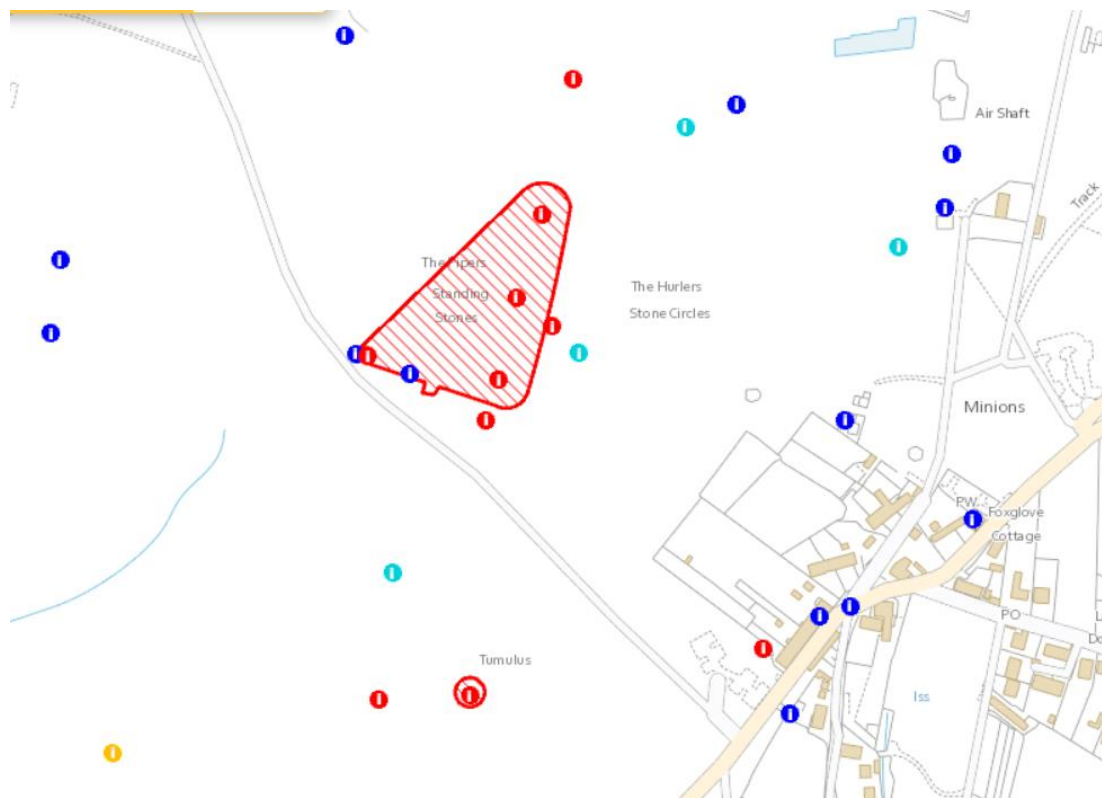
Clouties are frequently seen at holy wells, particularly in Penwith. Presumably they are put there by people with a very deep spiritual attachment to the wells. No doubt they derive much comfort by doing so. The practice is tolerated, even applauded, by others who visit.

Can we regard the offerings at the Hurlers in the same way? Nothing has been damaged and there has been no digging or movement of the stones. It isn't frivolous stone stacking, as has been seen at nearby Stowes Pound, which is actually damaging an archaeological feature. There is no reason to believe that whoever did it did so other than to fulfil a personal ritual that has significance in the way they think about the world, and maybe other worlds.



Photo: Iain Rowe

Yet there is no escaping the fact that the stones and the surrounding area are Scheduled and have legal protection. But does leaving a horseshoe, coins and flowers constitute a heritage crime? Historic England defines heritage crime as: 'any offence which harms the value of heritage assets and their settings'. Some might say that leaving objects there negatively affects the site and its setting; others would say that this case is insignificant and quite harmless.



Source:

https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=8&xcoord=225818&ycoord=71330&wsName=CLOS_historic_environment&layerName=Buildings,%20Sites%20and%20Monuments%20-%20points:Scheduled%20Monuments

Archaeologists are not able to say with certainty what purpose was originally served by stone circles, and maybe their function changed over the years. Might this act of deposition actually be similar to what was being done by people in the distant past? It also raises the point that so many historic monuments, however much we might conserve and stabilise them, do not look as they did when in use, nor are they used in the same way. Mostly they are ruinous, often just a tiny fragment of their original form. Should we do more, perhaps by rebuilding, or just leave the interpretation to the individual, albeit with access to the studies of experts in books, on websites and on interpretation panels? Maybe they will be given a new and totally different significance by our, and future, generations, possibly with new rituals being attached to them? These are complicated issues that have to be considered by all those who share the objective of conserving our historic environment.

And what about the horseshoe, flowers and coins found at the Hurlers? After consultation with the relevant authorities, they were quietly removed and the money placed in a charity box.

MOTORCIDE

Motorcide

n. the destruction or damage of an historical asset resulting from the use or misuse of a motor vehicle.

Issue 53 of *From Your Own Correspondents* reported that new defences had been added to Helland Bridge (HER 17108; Listed Building II* 67735; Scheduled Monument 15578; SX 0652 7149; Helland and St Mabyn parishes) to protect it from the regular damage inflicted by motor vehicles. Cormac did an excellent job in making the approaches more bridge-friendly, as well as placing stones on both sides of the carriageway to protect the parapet. And all seemed hopeful...

...until 19th June, when a car collided with the ancient structure, causing major damage to the eastern parapet, refuge and upper cutwater on the upstream side.



The *Cornwall Live* report of the incident, including video footage, can be found here: <https://www.cornwalllive.com/news/cornwall-news/river-camel-bridge-hanging-off-5550867>).

Such was the damage to the parapet that the bridge had to be closed.



Charles Henderson praised this lovely 15th century bridge in his *Old Cornish Bridges and Streams* (1928, reprinted 1972, D. Bradford Barton Ltd) and made this regrettably inaccurate prediction: 'The bridge is fortunately out of the line of a main road, so there is no need to have it widened or otherwise disfigured.' Well, he wasn't to know that the motor car was to become so unhealthily rampant, or that the bridge would form part of a rat-run between the A30 and B3266 roads. How devastated he would have been to see this and many other lovely medieval bridges, like Trekelland, routinely disfigured by collisions.

Credit is due to the authorities for closing the bridge quickly but even then motorists approached the notices and fencing, not prepared to believe that their way was blocked, that the divine right of motorists to travel at will, led on by the siren misinformation of satnav, might be thwarted. What can be done?



CRYING THE NECK

Brian Oldham (President of Liskeard Old Cornwall Society and CAS Area Rep) invites readers to the annual *Crying the Neck* ceremony near Liskeard:

Crying the Neck will be held a bit earlier this year by Liskeard Old Cornwall Society as our new venue has Winter Barley waiting to be cut. We'll be starting the Ceremony at 6.00pm on Friday July 30th and following the same programme as St. Ives OCS when they pioneered the first revival of this centuries old Cornish tradition back in 1928.



1983 ceremony

Photo supplied by Brian Oldham

Everyone is welcome to help us to keep this Harvest celebration alive and enjoy the wonderful wildflowers around the field in Pengover Green, map ref: SX27955 65166, postcode PL14 3NH. From the A390 at Merrymeet take either of the lanes signposted Pengover and you'll find us on your left at the crossroads in the hamlet. Parking is in the field itself, but if it's full please park sensibly in one of the lanes.



2020 ceremony

Photo supplied by Brian Oldham

After the Ceremony has ended and Trelawny has been sung, you'll be welcome to linger awhile and enjoy the views, and please bring a picnic with you if you wish. Wearing of masks will not be required, but whatever the rules are at the time, there'll be ample space to enable social distancing.



Pengover Green - this year's site

Photo: Brian Oldham

DISCOVERY IN LUXULYAN VALLEY

Jenny Heskett, Cormac Ranger for Luxulyan Valley, made an interesting discovery recently while leading a work party to eradicate Himalayan Balsam.



Photo: Jenny Heskett

This metal object was found in one of the enclosures next to the Rock Mill Quarry tramway in the Valley (approximately SX 06540 56400, Lanlivery parish; the tramway does not have a HER number but Rock Mill Quarry is HER 9700, Luxulyan parish, SX 0592 5680).



Photo: Jenny Heskett

The metal frame is about 6 feet long and 3 feet wide, with a hook at one end. Given that it is next to this often overlooked tramway it may be that it is a remnant of a wagon used to transport granite from the quarry down to Pontois Mill and Par. Further investigation is needed but that will probably have to wait until the vegetation subsides.



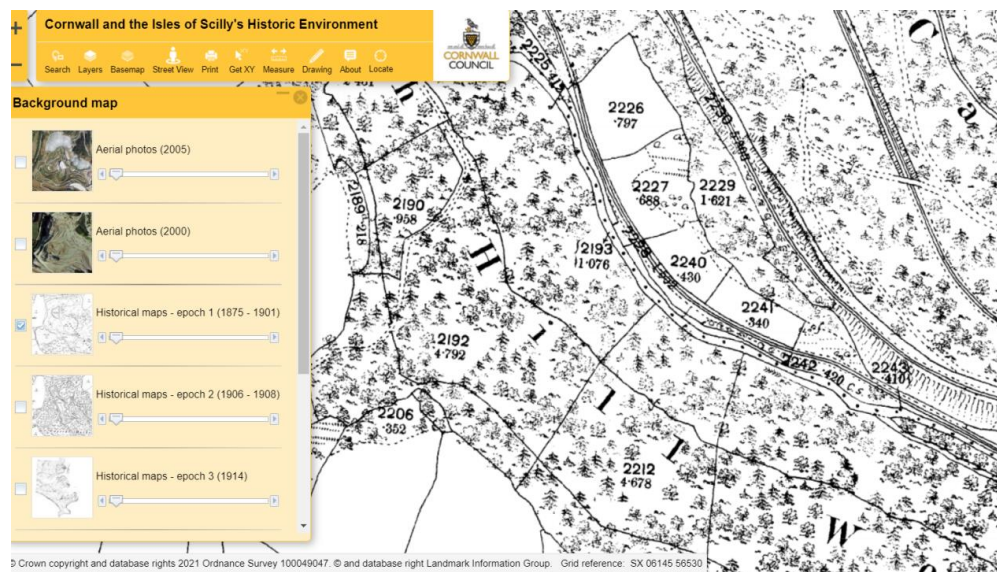
Photo: Jenny Heskett



Photo: Jenny Heskett

Thanks to the work of Jenny and her volunteers in recent years, this once-overgrown section of tramway has been opened up, giving a very tranquil alternative to the more popular route through the Valley. A new guide book about the Valley will be published shortly that will include this section as one of its recommended routes. Additionally, Cornwall Council is in the process of installing new interpretation panels, as well as picnic benches and seats that blend in beautifully with the wooded surroundings.

The section of tramway and adjacent enclosures can be seen in this map extract (south and west of enclosures 2226, 2227, 2240 and 2241):



Source:

https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=9&xcoord=206530&ycoord=56346&wsName=CiOS_historic_environment&layerName=

LOCK 21

Peter Murnaghan has been able to resume his task of keeping Lock 21 of the Liskeard and Looe Canal (HER 10183.38; SX 2420 6300, Liskeard parish) free of vegetation by organising another very successful work party.



Before clearing

Photo: Peter Murnaghan



Success!

Photo: Peter Murnaghan

As the last photo shows, this site is very close to the railway line, which makes it necessary to observe the highest safety standards while carrying out work. Fortunately, Peter is a superb organiser and hasn't been put off by the stringent, but necessary, requirements of Network Rail. It is because of the way in which he has organised this work that Network Rail has been pleased to offer its backing for the work. As a result, the archaeological evidence for this earlier transport link between Liskeard and Looe is there for all to see from the adjacent road.



Some of the volunteers enjoying a well-deserved rest

Photo: Peter Murnaghan

PLANNING WORRIES IN SOUTH-EAST CORNWALL

A couple of planning applications that might harm historic features have come to light recently in south-east Cornwall.

One concerns a bridge designed by Brunel. The story was reported in *Westcountry Bylines* (an excellent source of proper, independent, journalism in contrast to the much of media coverage in the south-west and nationally) and can be read here:

<https://westcountrybylines.co.uk/brunel-bridge-cornwall/> .

In a nutshell, Highways England Historical Railway Estate (HRE), a 'little known body responsible for redundant railway structures' wants to infill a railway bridge 3 miles west of the Royal Albert Bridge because it is "an ongoing and increasing risk to public safety" due to calcite and water damage. They can do this using permitted development powers.

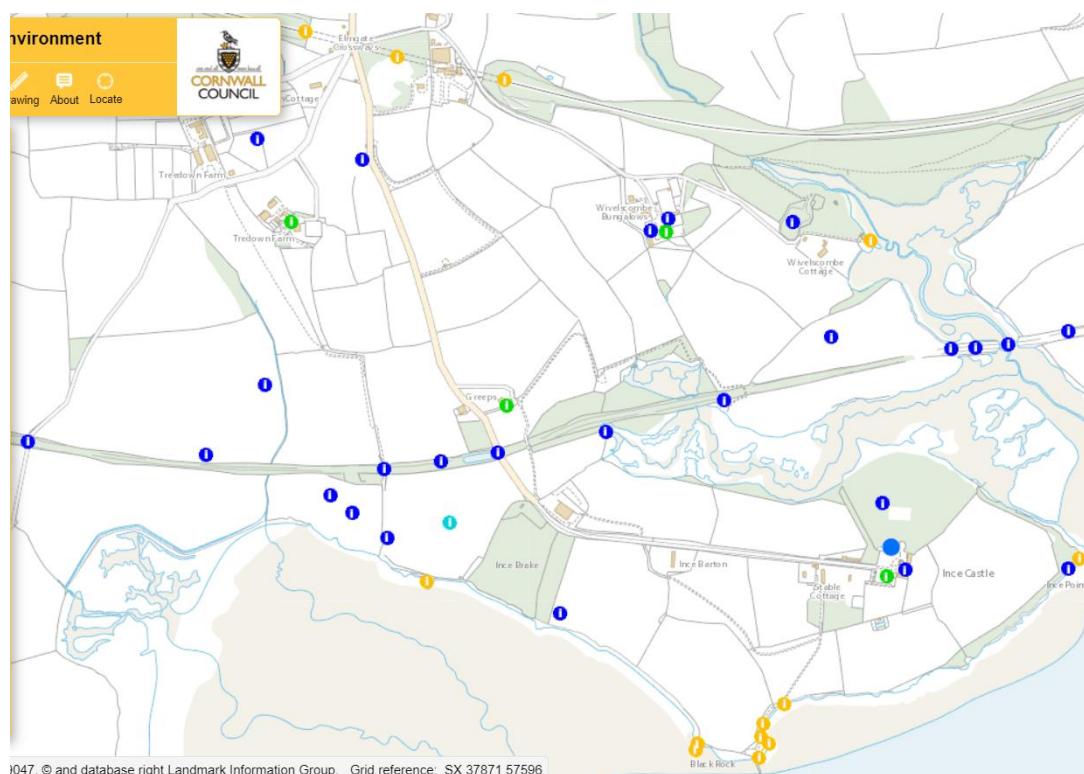
John Ball, of Cornwall Railway Society (<http://www.cornwallrailwaysociety.org.uk/>) disagrees. While accepting that minor repairs are needed, he feels it would be unnecessary,

as well as a waste of public money, to infill it. In his view, even though it is no longer in use, it: “merits preservation as an historic piece of the nation’s infrastructure, built by arguably our greatest civil engineer. To destroy it in the absence of any danger to the public – who do not even have any access to it – amounts to cultural vandalism.”

Unfortunately, the report did not give the name or exact location of this threatened structure. Further enquiries led nowhere but defeatism will not satisfy our readers, so minutes (several whole minutes in fact) have been spent in intensive desktop research (depending on how lax your definitions of ‘intensive’ and ‘research’ are). The *New Civil Engineer* website (<https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/24-historic-railway-structures-that-face-demolition-or-infilling-by-highways-england-10-05-2021/>) mentions Greeps Bridge which: ‘was engineered by Isambard Kingdom Brunel four month before his death as part of the abandoned Cornwall Railway between Saltash and St Germans’. So it seemed likely that a search on the excellent Cornwall Council Historic Environment Mapping page (<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/conservation-and-environment-protection/strategic-historic-environment-service/cornwall-and-isles-of-scilly-historic-environment-record/>) would do the trick. It normally does and it did this time.

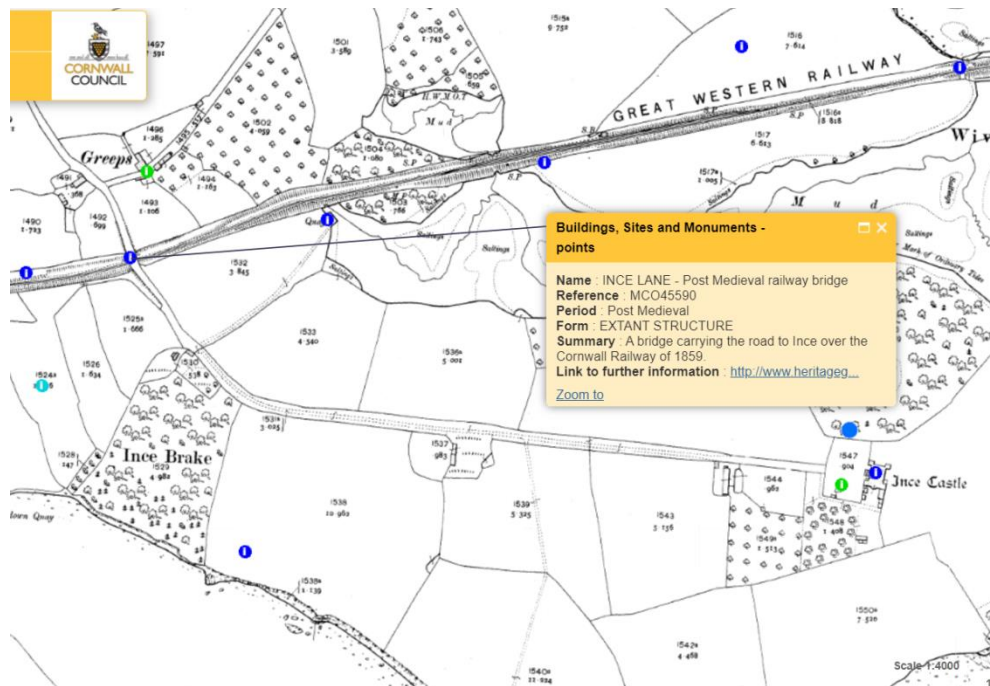
The *New Civil Engineer* had added that: ‘The route’s six timber viaducts were all dismantled following closure, leaving Greeps Bridge - carrying the access road to Ince Castle - as a rare survivor of Brunel’s original alignment’. So, it was necessary to find a bridge over the abandoned Cornwall Railway route near Greeps and leading to Ince Castle.

On the following map you can clearly see Greeps and Ince Castle:



It is possible to make out the modern railway line on its east-west route at the top of this extract and a line of blue dots marking a linear feature to the south. One blue dot lies to the south of Greeps on a track leading to Ince Castle. But does the southern linear feature mark an abandoned section of railway? By clicking on the blue dot, Heritage Gateway tells us it is Ince Lane Bridge, which carries the road to Ince over the Cornwall Railway of 1859 (HER 169585; SX 3934 5674; Saltash parish).

The beauty of this mapping page is that you can check old OS maps and this confirms that this bridge is on a section of line that was later bypassed:



And on the aerial photo (2005) the line of the former railway can be seen clearly.



So, after all that, the bridge seems to have been identified and if you wish to pass on your views about the infilling, the *Westcountry Bylines* article gives details of how to do so.

Saltash Heritage is a very active organisation dedicated to research, education and conservation. Not only does it have a website (<http://www.saltash-heritage.org.uk/>), it also runs a museum and history centre, besides offering a programme of events. Not surprisingly, it is keen to protect heritage assets in Saltash, especially in the conservation area.

However, this organisation is very concerned about a planning application relating to the site of the Waterside Inn. This building, formerly known as the Wheatsheaf Inn, dated from the late 18th century and was probably built on the site of a Civil War battery. It was also the subject of a famous Victorian legal case, 'Goodman versus Mayor of Saltash', which is still referred to by lawyers. To commemorate this historic event, Saltash Town Council arranged in 1982 for an inscribed plaque to be fixed to the front of the building. The building was a key part of the historic riverside that was designated as a conservation area.

A planning application to demolish the building and redevelop the site was made in 2018 – see PA18/07445 | Redevelopment of site to provide four apartments and a small shop unit (A1/A3) (demolition of the public house) | Waterside Inn Tamar Street Saltash Cornwall PL12 4EL (go to this site for details: <https://planning.cornwall.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=PD534DFGJTZ00>). This attracted much opposition locally but was given conditional approval. One of the conditions was for an archaeological survey. Here is the condition in full:

11 A) No development shall commence until a programme of archaeological work including a Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of significance and research questions, and: 1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording 2. The programme for post investigation assessment 3. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording 4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation 5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation 6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation B) No development shall take place other than in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A). C) The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been secured. D) The archaeological recording condition will normally only be discharged when all elements of the WSI including on site works,

analysis, report, publication (where applicable) and archive work has been completed.

Reason: To ensure that provision is made to record the building and any features of historic and archaeological interest in accordance with the aims and intentions of Policy 24 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030 (adopted November 2016). A pre-commencement condition is required in this case

Very recently the building was demolished –it had become dilapidated. Saltash Heritage is anxious that the condition requiring a proper archaeological survey is fulfilled and fears that an application may be made for it to be waived.

Certain powerful figures in, around and behind central government would like to see a libertarian, free-for-all approach to development in this country but those much-feared changes have not yet come to pass. So let's hope that the stipulation that this site in Saltash should have a proper archaeological survey is carried out.

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* 57, or send an email to arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk.

Roger Smith, 19th July 2021

