

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.

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Issue 40

THIS MONTH'S FEATURES

Very best wishes to all readers in these difficult times! Stay safe! Keep smiling!

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IN SEARCH OF THE POLYPHANTS' GRAVEYARD

In May 2015, Area Representatives visited the beautiful, Grade I Listed church of Lanteglos-by-Camelford (SX 0881 8233), where Ann Preston-Jones (Historic England) and Andrew Langdon (Federation of Old Cornwall Societies and CAS) explained the challenges of maintaining such an important structure.



Andrew Langdon explains the significance of one of the crosses. Photo: Ann Preston-Jones

Before the recent lockdown, Ann and Andrew made a visit to the church, and were able to report good and bad news. Ann explains: 'We looked at the fine collection of crosses outside the church, all in good condition, but we were saddened by the state of the church whose Polyphant stone windows were literally falling apart and where green slime inside indicated a very damp building. The church, in a lovely valley setting, is grade 1 listed, and is particularly interesting and beautiful, with Norman origins, and medieval glass and roofs.'

An assessment of the good and bad points of Polyphant stone can be found in Cornwall Council's *The Identification of Heritage Quarries Minerals Safeguarding DPD Evidence Report December 2018* (<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/37613632/evidence-report-the-identification-of-heritage-quarries-adoption-december-2018.pdf>):

However, the most famous stone in this area is an exotic type of greenstone which has been worked at Polyphant (SX 260/826), near Launceston since Norman times. This was originally intruded as an ultrabasic igneous rock, and then subsequently altered so the original olivines and other minerals were converted to a mixture of talc, chlorite and various carbonates (Power and Scott, 1995). The resulting rock is quite soft, but is suitable for carving and polishing. Many churches in East Cornwall and farther afield have interior features made of Polyphant stone. The Boer War Memorial adjacent to the West Door of Truro Cathedral is a fine piece of carving in Polyphant Stone. Launceston Priory and Castle also contain much Polyphant stone, but it does not weather well in exterior use, presumably because it is so soft and porous, and therefore susceptible to frosts. After a fire severely damaged Newquay Parish Church, it was found that the Polyphant Stone in the building would have to be replaced. The quarry at Polyphant, which had not been worked for many years, was reopened and supplies of stone obtained.

But the good news is that the church has been given a new roof as part of a restoration programme. Not only that, it was recently opened again to the public – or at least it was! Hopefully, it will be possible to visit before too long. The story of the restoration work can be found at: <https://www.lanteglosbycamelfordchurch.com/restoration-updates/>.



Restoration under way, October 2019

Photo: Ann Preston-Jones



Erecting the scaffolding is a major undertaking

Photo: Ann Preston-Jones



Protection for a churchyard cross

Photo: Ann Preston-Jones

Ann adds that, 'a small exhibition / museum space has been created at the SE end of the church, in the S chancel aisle. Two lovely greenstone windows are displayed here as well as a number of other interesting artefacts and information. One of the windows is said to have come from the church house nearby. It is well worth a visit.'



Photos: Ann Preston-Jones



A table tomb, situated just outside the porch was in a very poor condition, as the following photos show:



Table tomb being scrutinised by Andrew Langdon

Photo: Ann Preston-Jones



The table tomb before restoration

Photo: Andrew Langdon

Andrew, through his involvement with the Historic Churches Trust, has taken a close interest in the entire project (even being allowed to go up on the roof) and is very pleased to report that the table tomb has also been restored.

For those of you who are avid church explorers, you may enjoy the photographs in this Twitter account: https://twitter.com/hashtag/LookUpForLent?src=hashtag_click.

TIME-DEPTH IN ROCHE

No doubt many people are planning excursions to take place when the lockdown is eased, or lifted, and in Cornwall it isn't difficult (or expensive) to find locations worthy of a visit. Some might dismiss Roche as being too close to the clay country, or as just a place to pass through, but that would be quite wrong. With a little effort it is easy to find interesting archaeological features spanning not just centuries but millennia – and all in a very small area.

St Michael's Chapel on Roche Rock (SW 9910 5961) is one of Cornwall's most famous landmarks. The rock, chapel and vicinity comprise a Scheduled Monument and the chapel is a Grade I Listed Building.



According to Heritage Gateway: 'It was licensed in 1409 and built at about that date, and consisted of a lower room in which, it is said, a hermit used to live, and an upper floor that served as a chapel. The lower room uses the natural rock for two of its sides and the upper room uses the rock for part of its floor. The stonework is in good order, though the floors and roof are missing. It is not known when it went out of use.'

(Source:

https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=MCO10149&resourceID=1020).

The site is easily accessible, and for those who don't mind clambering up an old iron ladder, it is possible to get into the chapel. Jan Tregeagle was said to have fled here to escape the chore of emptying Dozmary Pool with a limpet shell but don't worry, he's moved on – to weave ropes from the sand of Gwenor Cove.

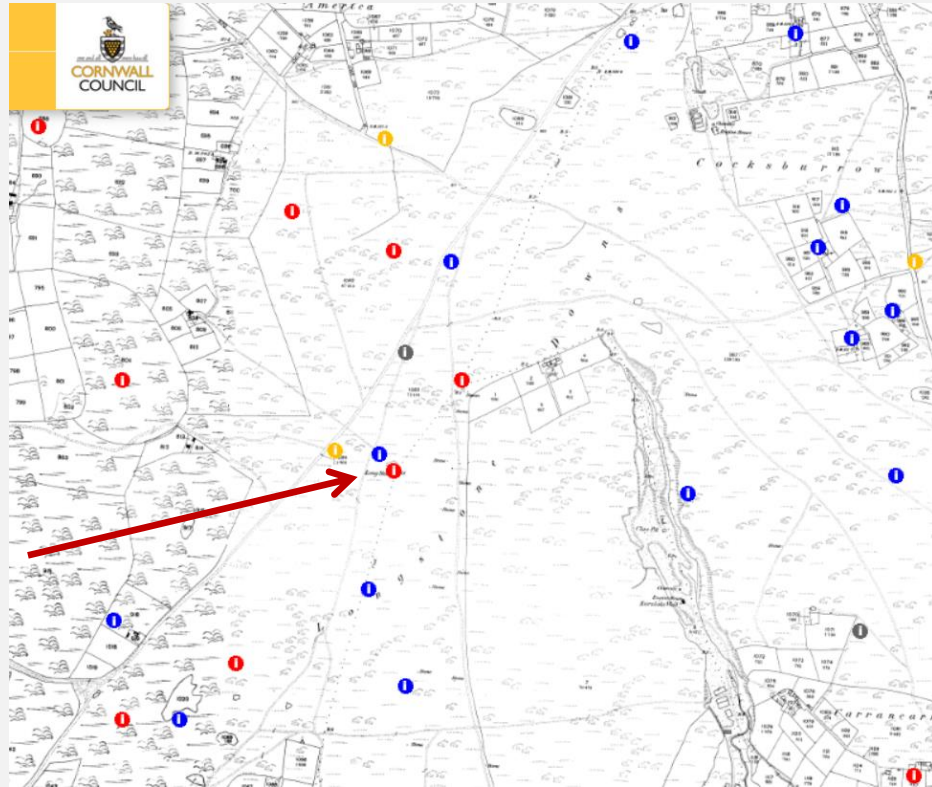
The rock is visible from miles away and it has attracted attention for a very long time. This is no idle claim because Dick Cole and Andy Jones of Cornwall Archaeological Unit investigated 10 pits very close to the rock. Their report can be found in Cornish Archaeology 41-42 (2002-3), which can be read at: https://cornisharchaeology.org.uk/journals/No.41-42_2002-3.pdf. They concluded that:

The pits were found to contain structured deposits of Neolithic date, which included pottery, flints, a small saddle quern and charred hazelnuts. Radiocarbon determinations ranging over the period 3790-3370 cal BC were obtained from six of the pits, suggesting that the site was in use over several centuries. Analysis of charred environmental material indicated that oak and hazel woodland with some clearings existed nearby. It is suggested that the pits were the result of ritualized activity associated with seasonal gatherings close to a prominent landscape feature. The investigation has given a rare insight into Early Neolithic activity in lowland Cornwall and confirms the significance of Roche Rock as an important place in the landscape several millennia before the construction of the iconic fifteenth-century chapel.

Nor is this the only monument in Roche that might intrigue prehistorians. At SW 9867 6010, on a grassy plot in front of sheltered housing sits the Longstone:



This menhir was once a prominent feature on Longstone Downs in the parish of St Stephen-in-Brannel (SW 9837 5613), as the Ordnance Survey map from the 1880s shows:



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You won't find Longstone Downs any longer as the entire landscape has been blasted, extracted and dumped on by the china clay industry, as this aerial photo of 2005 shows:



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But let's not be negative. The Longstone was not only rescued but it and nearby features were meticulously surveyed before the china clay industry engulfed the area. Not only that, landscaping and re-seeding are gradually turning the sterile clay country landscape into a quieter, greener environment that will no doubt puzzle, and maybe delight, future generations.

Let's return to the Longstone itself. The fascinating story of the rescue excavation is told in *Cornish Archaeology* 10, 1971 (<https://cornisharchaeology.org.uk/volume-10-1971/>) in ***Excavations on Longstone Downs, St Stephen-in-Brannel & St Mewan*** by Miles, H and Miles, T.J.



I am very grateful to Henrietta Quinnell (formerly Miles) for the following photographs of the dig in 1970, her first excavation in Cornwall and her first after obtaining her post at Exeter University.



Rescue archaeology

Photo: Henrietta Quinnell

In May and June 1970, Henrietta directed this excavation, which included nearby Cocksbarrow. The Longstone was a Scheduled Ancient Monument and sat on the boundary of the parishes of St Mewan and St Stephen-in-Brannel. The stone stood over 10 feet in height above the ground and bore the carved initials of 'AJN' and 'JL', thought to date from the 18th century.



Photos: Henrietta Quinnell

It became apparent that the stone in its setting was the last of four phases. Originally, there may have been a wooden post (perhaps lasting for 30 to 50 years), later another stone, and finally the impressive menhir that was rescued and removed to Roche. Quite possibly, there had been a burial early on, even though this isn't thought to be the primary purpose of menhirs. According to the report: *'The shape and size of the Phase 2 pit suggest an inhumation grave. The stones found on the bottom and sides may have been laid over a body. The acid soil would have dissolved all traces of unburnt bone.'* The Phase 2 pit might have been dug while the post still stood. Small, white pebbles in the Phase 2 pit, and in the packing of the Phase 1 pit, were similar to those found with a cremation in the cist near the Try menhir in Gulval.

It was thought that the Longstone had been set up for ritual or magical purposes, as well as marking boundaries and providing an easily identifiable meeting place. Dating the different phases was a real challenge, particularly in the absence of associated artefacts. It was noted that: *'Every date given to a menhir by associated finds has been within the Bronze Age.'* But the idea that a wooden post may have been there in the first instance raised the possibility of an even earlier date, perhaps during the later Neolithic: *'It is just possible that the original post on the Long Stone site was erected before the beginning of the Bronze Age. The origins*

of the practice of erecting single standing stones may lie, with those of almost all the ritual structures of the Bronze Age, in the Later Neolithic.'

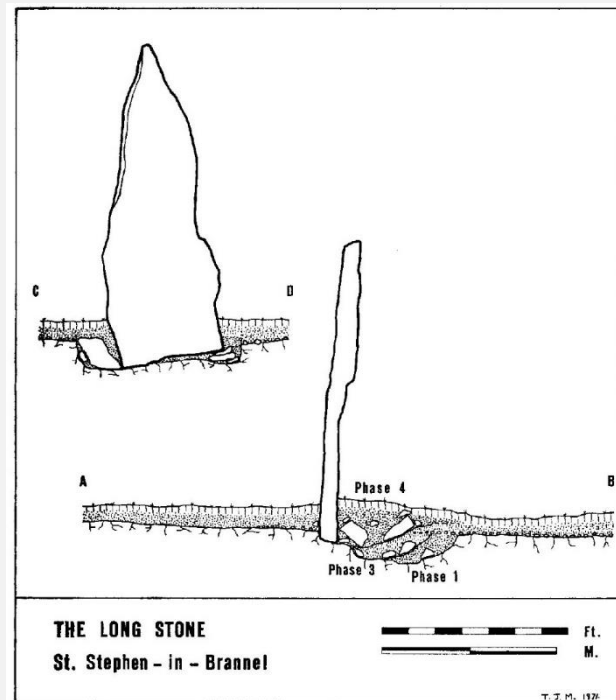


Fig. 3 The Long Stone—plans of Phases 1 to 4, *Excavations on Longstone Downs, St Stephen-in-Brannel & St Mewan* by Miles, H and Miles, T.J, *Cornish Archaeology* 10, 1971

Henrietta recalls: 'ECLP [English Clays Lovering Pochin] lent us two of the adjacent cottages which had been emptied prior to destruction - so that we could all live on site. One of these cottages was still occupied and a lady there made us Cornish pasties once a week, for a shilling each I think - my first introduction to the local delicacy!'

Moving the stone was another challenging task (although easier than in prehistory) as these photos show:



Photo: Henrietta Quinnell



Photo: Henrietta Quinnell



Photo: Henrietta Quinnell

Henrietta adds: 'Close observation of the photos will show that the top of the menhir swung down and broke off during lifting: this was because we overestimated the amount of the menhir below ground and placed the lashing too high up. But the top was re-attached and doesn't show today unless closely looked for.'

The Longstone in its new home is already gathering a (different) significance in the minds of local people and passers-by, but the story of the stone in its original setting, in a landscape that has vanished, is well worth reading in Volume 10 of our Society's journal.

Moving towards the present day, the parish church of St Gomonda is worth an hour or so of anyone's time. It underwent restoration twice in the 19th century but its 15th century tower, and features like the Bodmin-type Norman font, are of great interest. It is a Grade II* Listed Building and according to Charles Henderson it may be situated in a lann.



In the churchyard you can find a cross that is similar to that at Merther Uny in Wendron parish:



Unsurprisingly, the Roche area is rich in industrial archaeology, including tin-streaming, mining and china clay working, but one building, south of the village at Carbis (SX 0011 5958), is rather special:



Carbis brick and tile works is Grade II Listed. According to Heritage Gateway (https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=MCO25335&resourceID=1020):

The brickworks at Carbis was first recorded on the 2nd Edition OS 1:2500 of 1907, and was visited by CAU in 1990 as part of the china-clay survey ... The site is Listed, Grade II. There are three surviving circular beehive brick kilns with granite bases and brick tops, fed by furnace doors at the base of the kiln. A square all-brick chimney stack survives to full height. To the south-west is a partly collapsed water wheel which drove a pug-mill, which also survives in ruinous condition ...

The kilns were extinguished in 1942 to prevent them being used as beacons by enemy aircraft during World War Two ...

Of course, Roche has far more than this to offer but this small selection of monuments may just be enough to tempt readers to make a leisurely visit to a village which is too often overlooked in spite of evidence that spans millennia.

A NORTHERN MISCELLANY

Richard Heard is one of our most experienced Area Representatives and has been involved in many archaeological investigations. His parishes are: Morwenstow, Kilkhampton, Poughill, Bude, Stratton, Launcells, Marhamchurch, Week St Mary, Whitstone, North Tamerton, St Gennys, Jacobstow and Poundstock. He has provided these updates:

New churchyard seat at St. James' Kilkhampton [SS 2525 1133]; placed by the new path contractor before the west tower door. Former tomb or altar slab, granite, removed from outside the south porch when entrance path slates were discarded in favour of a non-slip surface. This block should have been left in its original position. The 2 supports are suitable granite blocks.



Photo: Richard Heard

Next is an area of the Duckpool site [SS 2008 1164], Morwenstow parish. South east sector, not excavated nor previously photographed. It had the appearance of a natural surface but the past winter sea has washed the surface exposing more midden. Scraps of ash, bone and shells but no pottery yet. I moistened the area because the portion centre of the photos was clearly red when I visited previously, being rain soaked.



Photo: Richard Heard

When I returned after checking the site I think the red is more prominent. The semi rectangular block appears to have some significance, as do other protruding stones on the periphery. I forgot to replace my 2 decimetre scale!



Photo: Richard Heard

[Further information about this Romano-British site, with which Richard has long been involved, can be found at: https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=MCO23053&resourceID=1020.]

Kilkhampton “Castles” [SS 2431 1158] – The inner bailey and motte looking west. For all the decades I have known the site I have never seen it so clear of bracken and brambles. Last year’s shrunk piles after hand cutting are visible. The Nat. Trust has allowed sheep in for a while.



Photo: Richard Heard

“Castles”. The dry moat, the north east corner.



Photo: Richard Heard

Report and photographs by Richard Heard

TURNING FLINT INTO BRONZE

David and Linda Edyvean monitor parishes on Bodmin Moor and occasionally spot flint artefacts lying on the surface. The location of any find is recorded and the finds reported so that the information is available on the Historic Environment Record (<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/strategic-historic-environment-service/cornwall-and-scilly-historic-environment-record/>). David is an experienced engineer, with a great interest in experimental archaeology. Recently he has set himself a different task, casting in bronze a replica of an arrowhead found on Bodmin Moor.



Photo: David Edyvean



Photo: David Edyvean



Photo: David Edyvean

And here is the end result!



Photo: David Edyvean

HOW RESPRYN BRIDGE WAS PROTECTED

Respryn Bridge, near Lanhydrock (Grade II* Listed, SX 0993 6349) now enjoys protection from the damage caused by motor vehicles crossing it. Few people have done more to monitor this wonderful medieval structure in recent years than Robin Paris. In 2018, after years of vehicular collisions, Cormac took effective action to protect it, in the form of stout pillars at either end – and it has worked! Robin has provided photographs of how the bridge was saved:



Constructing a pillar

Photo: Robin Paris



Blockwork and metal girders form the skeleton of the pillars
Photo: Robin Paris



A gap of 7 feet 4 inches had to be created between the pillars

Photo: Robin Paris



Some consider the pillars to be intrusive but the bridge was vulnerable and every effort was made to use local stone so that the work blended in.

Photo: Robin Paris

KENWYN OAK

Whilst taking care to maintain social distance, Andrew Langdon and Ann Preston-Jones have been taking their daily exercise within a small radius of Truro. Several of their walks have been through Kenwyn Churchyard (SW 8197 4584) where a profusion of wild garlic scents the air, down steep steps to the valley of the river Allen and on to Idless.

The church steps appear ancient, although the HER's mapping (<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/strategic-historic-environment-service/cornwall-and-scilly-historic-environment-record/>) makes it clear that they were constructed after c 1880 and before 1907, and were linked to the expansion of Kenwyn's graveyard as Truro's population grew. At the foot of the steps is a huge old oak tree, whose size suggests that it pre-dates the steps, even though it is not shown on the first edition OS map (as many trees are). Andrew's tape measure, usually reserved for crosses, was dug out and revealed the fact that the tree's trunk measures almost 4.5m in diameter. According to the Ancient Tree Inventory, this means that the tree may be almost 250 years old and is a 'veteran'. It may have been a youngster at the time of the Napoleonic Wars! Such old trees are linked to the history of the landscape every bit as much as our monuments and likewise need careful management, for example by not ploughing too close to avoid damage to their roots.



Photo: Ann Preston-Jones

This tree is recorded on the Ancient Tree Inventory: <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/tree-search/tree?treeid=38934&from=3523&v=1671554&ml=map&z=13&u=1&up=r&nwLat=50.30487947508975&nwLng=-5.189983367919915&seLat=50.221919003018016&seLng=-4.89747238159179#/> - along with many others. This inventory is excellent in help to identify interesting trees, and by looking at it side-by-side with the HER's historic mapping, it is possible to understand so much more about the trees and their place in the landscape.



Photo: Ann Preston Jones

Report and photographs by Ann Preston-Jones

A VIEW FROM A WINDOW

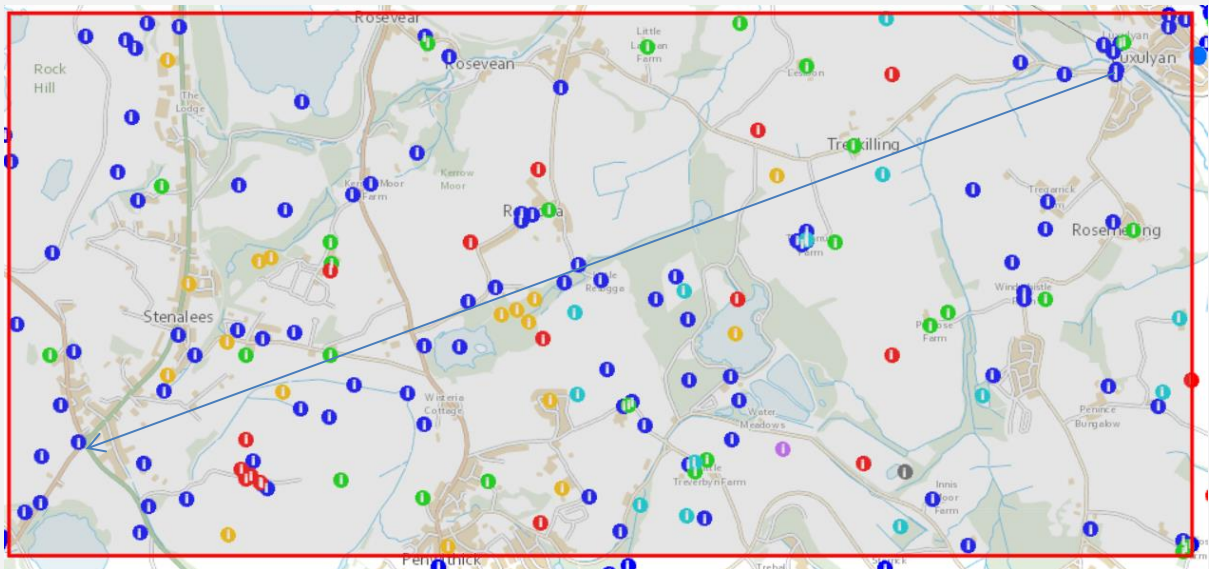
What a shame – just as the weather turned dry and sunny this terrible virus has restricted our movement. We would like to be outside, perhaps looking at archaeological features in the landscape, but it's impossible – or is it? Actually, anyone fortunate enough to have a view from a window can get to know the past of their local area in spite of the lockdown.

Here is a view from a window in Luxulyan, looking south-west towards Caerloggas Downs and Stenalees:



At first glance it isn't promising, just some late 20th century housing in the foreground with fields and hills beyond. But with the excellent Cornwall Council Historic Environment mapping website at <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/strategic-historic-environment-service/cornwall-and-scilly-historic-environment-record/> it is possible to investigate features without straying beyond the house.

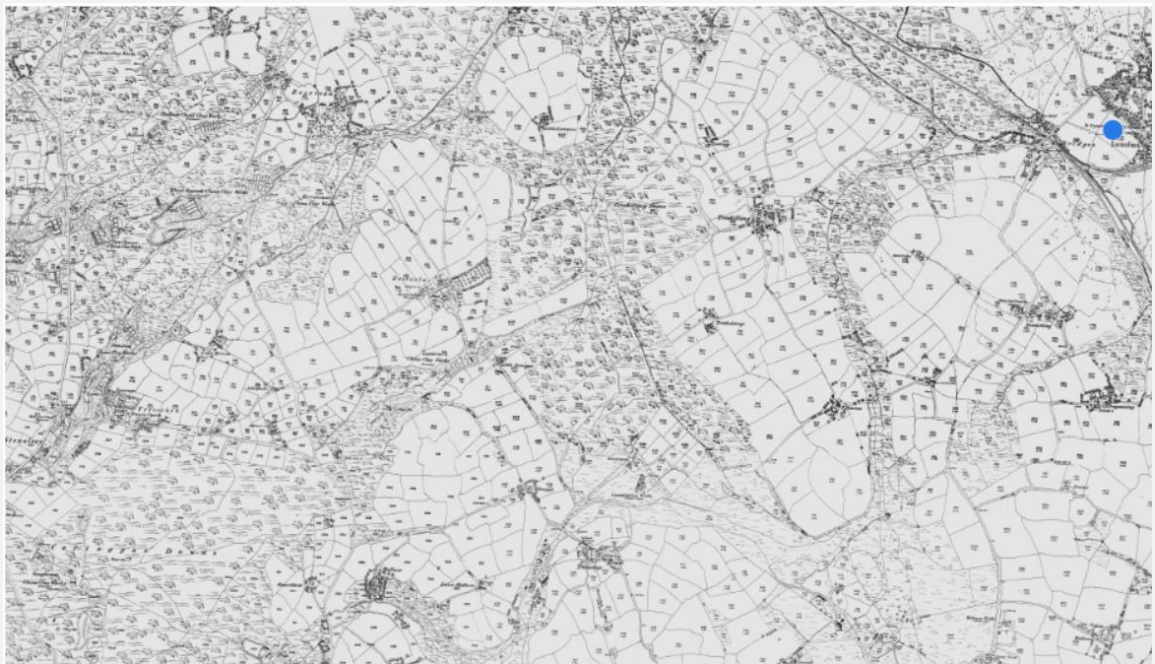
Take the hedge in the photo. By changing the base-map to the Ordnance Survey map of the 1880s, it can be established that the hedge was there at the time of the survey, when the entire site comprised fields. In fact, it is also on the tithe survey and therefore is classed as Anciently Enclosed Land. Given that so much enclosure in Cornwall occurred towards the end of the medieval period, it is possible that the hedge is very old indeed.



The different coloured dots suggest a wealth of information spanning thousands of years, although the blue dots show a significant industrial legacy. The arrow indicates the line of sight from Luxulyan.

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It is easy to check the Buildings, Sites and Monuments Record to find out what any archaeologically curious crow might be flying over if it flapped its way from Luxulyan to Stenalees, and by clicking on the dots, information on Heritage Gateway can be found. It is even possible to view the area as mapped in the past and to use the slider to match up old and new maps. This is the same area in the 1880s:



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A close-up photo shows greater detail, which can then be checked on the HER map.



As our curious bird flies south-west it would spot, with the assistance of the HER:

- A nearby building with striking roof-tile finials in the hamlet of Bridges (now part of Luxulyan, but which grew through its association with the tramway of J.T. Treffry and the later Cornwall Minerals Railway).
- Medieval farming hamlet of Treskilling – a well-documented part of the medieval manor of Greadow, owned by Tywardreath Priory. (And if our imaginary crow made a return flight, it would see the fossilised field system on the west-facing slopes of Treskilling Downs.)
- The grassy, conical sand burrows of Lantern china clay works (look between the large conifers).
- Caerloggas Downs (background on the left), where formerly a number of Bronze Age barrows were situated (the HER directs us to <https://cornisharchaeology.org.uk/volume-14-1975/> where we can read about their excavation: Miles, H: **Barrows on the St Austell Granite, Cornwall**).
- Treverbryn village, with a Victorian school (now converted) and church, reflecting the settlement changes in the area resulting from mining and china clay.
- The distant remains of china clay works like Singlerose, and possibly Bluebarrow, some of which were previously exploited for tin.
- A 21st century wind turbine.

All this, and more, can be done from home. Even a quick look at the website will suggest in the broadest terms how an area has evolved. Using the references given in Heritage Gateway, and looking at the Event Record archaeological reports, for which links are provided, the armchair archaeologist can carry out some leisurely research. It may not be in-depth or learned but it is something all of us can do while we are confined to our homes. And when the lockdown is lifted, local walks or trips will be so much better informed!



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

Roger Smith, 7th April 2020

