

FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS

Updates from Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives

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Issue 48

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COUNCIL BARROW – A CASE FOR ACTION?

Karen Dickin recently visited Council Barrow in Cardinham parish (SX 0994 7026, Scheduled Monument CO340). Coincidentally, in her recent CAS lecture, Cathy Parkes referred to an 1835 newspaper report about this barrow coming under threat from agricultural intakes. But we live in more enlightened times, don't we? Surely a Scheduled Monument will be kept safe from all threats for posterity? Well, read Karen's account to find out if that is so:

Council Barrow in Cardinham Parish lies a few miles north of Bodmin, just 30 metres or so from the eastbound carriageway of the A30. There is no direct access from the dual carriageway, but it can be reached via an old road, now closed off, which once joined the A30 from Helland. The location is an upland ridge with far ranging views across Racecourse Downs to the South West and Cardinham Down to the East.

The monument is listed by Historic England as a "bowl barrow, surviving as a circular mound measuring up to 16m in diameter and 2m high with hollows, caused by early excavation or robbing, to the centre and south side. The surrounding quarry ditch, from which material to construct the mound was derived, is preserved as a buried feature"

It is on the *Heritage at Risk* register as being in a declining condition and, sadly, a recent visit revealed it to be in a sorry state. In fact, it wasn't visible at all!

It sits on open access land which has become a wasteland covered with impenetrable thicket and gorse. . The monument itself is now so overgrown with scrub and trees that is hard to make out at all on the ground. Thick vegetation completely obscures the entire barrow. A fenced off farm track leading into an adjacent field, which runs alongside the barrow has become waterlogged and makes the access difficult.



Council Barrow Cardinham as seen November 2020

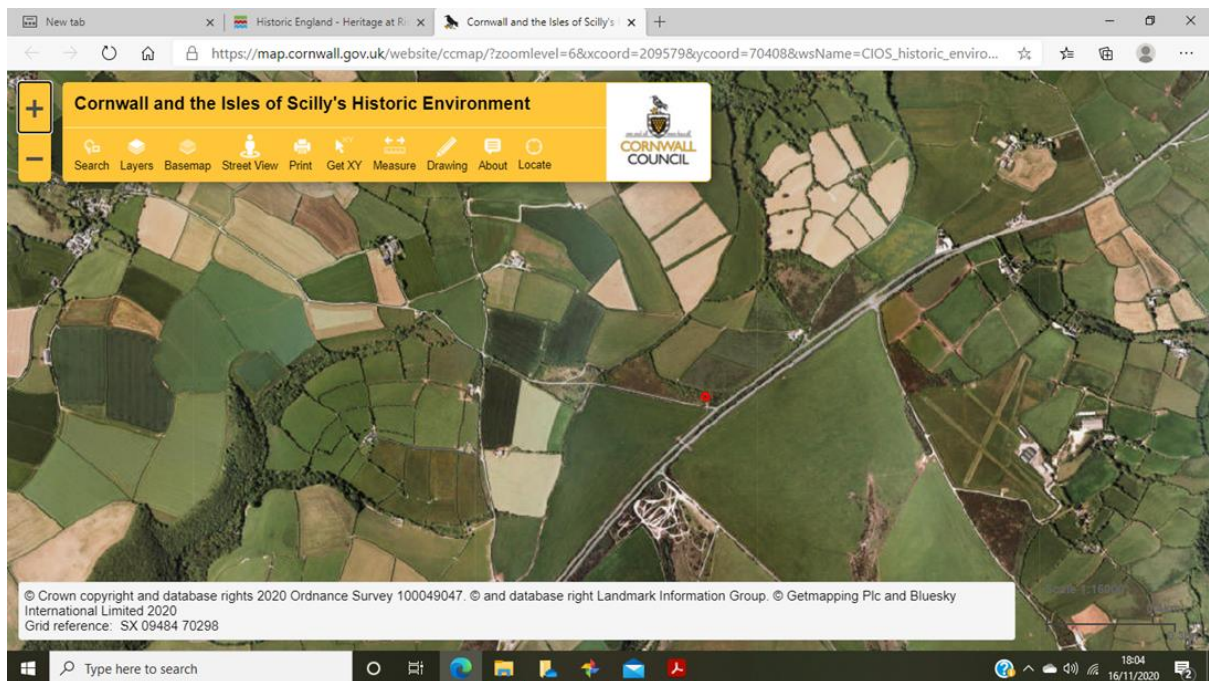
Photo: Karen Dickin

This was very disappointing because, as shown in the photograph below taken in 2006, the site was then clear of vegetation.

Is this a contender perhaps for a future scrub clearance session?



Photo on Historic England Listing: Taken on a site monitoring visit on the 14th January 2006.



Report by Karen Dickin

A MILESTONE TO WHERE?

Diana Sutherland has discovered a milestone near Launceston, raising questions about historical routes in the area. This is her account:

Discovery of an unknown milestone near Egloskerry, 4 miles west of Launceston



Photo: Diana Sutherland

The milestone appeared following hedge trimming on a short stretch of unused green lane.

Ian Thompson (Milestone Society; <https://www.milestonesociety.co.uk/>), who examined it, hoped it might be an exciting survivor of the first set of milestones erected by the Launceston Turnpike Trust but this looks unlikely at the moment.

At one point it was thought that the green lane was the line of the old turnpike to Camelford but examination of various maps - tithe maps, 1906 and the Martyn map of 1748 - showed that it only seemed to be a roadway to the fields from the farm. However, it still could have possibly marked a pre-turnpike road before 1760 as its hedge follows a hedge to the east which lines up with the present road on the north side of Race Down. Race Down, so called because of the horse races held here, and its continuation to the east, St Stephen's Down, were not enclosed until 1847-8. A certain distance of the present main road has a double hedge, with enough space to allow for a trackway, so one could imagine the line of the pre-turnpike road might have been a little below what it is now. However, this is purely conjecture.



Photo: Diana Sutherland

Another possibility is that the new milestone was on a pre-turnpike road which turned south opposite the church in Egloskerry and followed a different track to Camelford via Badharlick and Tregear. However, the remaining milestones on this road have roman numerals, a different inscription and are also different in shape and size.



Source:

https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=7&xcoord=226948&ycoord=86388&wsName=CiOS_historic_environment&layerName=

There are 4 surviving listed milestones from Launceston to Egloskerry, 1764-1765, of the same design as seen here.



The newly discovered one has a similar inscription but its size and shape are slightly different.

Photo: Diana Sutherland

Report by Diana Sutherland

LAWRENCE HOUSE INVESTIGATES

Besides being a very active Area Rep, Diana somehow finds time to volunteer at Lawrence House Museum in Launceston (<https://lawrencehousemuseum.org.uk/>). Recently they have been asked to identify a mystery object, as Diana explains:

Here is another strange item found near Launceston which will hopefully eventually be taken for examination by someone in the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

The object was dug up in a field in South Petherwin near Launceston.

Carved from polyphant stone, it appears to be a skeleton about 8 inches high standing in a stooped position and looking down at its clasped hands. It also seems as if it is draped with a garment fastened in front?

The square hole on the base indicates it must have been attached to something.



Photos: Diana Sutherland



Has anyone any ideas? lawrencehousemuseum@yahoo.co.uk

Report by Diana Sutherland

Editor's note: CAS was also approached about this object. Various experts were consulted, with the consensus being that it may not be very old and is probably a 'Celtic Christian' style image of Our Lady. However, further interpretations and ideas would be very welcome!

MONUMENTAL IMPROVEMENT GUIDED WALKS

The Cornwall AONB Monumental Improvement Project has undoubtedly been a monumental success, not only carrying out essential conservation work around key features but also involving various communities in the care of their local historic environment. Project Development Officer Chris Coldwell has worked very closely with CAS Area Reps but now he is off to a new job in Scotland. We will miss him and wish him well. But the project continues in the hands of Natalie Haly (Project Manager) and Jacob Parry (Activities Officer). Jacob has sent us this update about guided walks in the AONB. (By the way, if you need cheering upon these dull, dark days, have a look at the stunning AONB website: <https://www.cornwall-aonb.gov.uk/>.)



Monumental Improvement – Guided Walks

We are extremely grateful for the continued support of the Cornwall Archaeological Society – amongst our many other wonderful partners – in driving forward the success of the Monumental Improvement project to date. Through this challenging and turbulent time, and thanks to the partners involved, we have been able to continue the important work involved in stabilising Scheduled Monuments across the Cornwall AONB.

We are happy to announce that our Project Manager, Natalie Haly, and Activities Officer, Jacob Parry, have now joined the team at the Cornwall AONB and will be coordinating the Monumental Improvement project going forward. Natalie and Jacob are delighted to be part of the team and look forward to working with CAS and our other partners over the next year.

Monumental Improvement aims to tackle the current limited understanding of ancient monuments across the Cornwall AONB, with the vision of enabling these sites to tell the story of Cornwall over 4,000 years to visitors and local people. As part of this, we aim to develop a detailed plan of activities to engage people with heritage for 2021-22. We hope that in designing and delivering these activities we can grow the partnership between CAS and the Cornwall AONB, as well as engage people with heritage in a physical and invigorating way. These activities will also provide learning opportunities, build connections between people and landscape, and form a vital part of the Monumental Improvement project delivery.

Even before Covid-19 had bound us to our homes, walks in the Cornish landscape were immensely beneficial for our physical and mental wellbeing. So, as a part of this project, we'd like to organise a series of 'taster' guided walks for early 2021 with the help of Cornwall Archaeological Society's characteristic local knowledge and expertise. We are looking for CAS volunteers to help lead a guided walk with the support of Jacob, our Activities Officer.

If you would be interested in leading a guided walk, or would like to find out more, please get in touch: Jacob Parry, Activities Officer – Monumental Improvement: Jacob.Parry@Cornwall.gov.uk

Notes:

The work forms a part of the Cornwall AONB's Monumental Improvement Project, which secured project Development funding of £88,900 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and £20,000 matching funding from Historic England in December 2019 to help the Cornwall AONB Partnership progress their plans to apply for a full National Lottery grant of £489,700 at a later date.*

This project aims to safeguard and stabilise 40 scheduled monuments at risk of loss across the AONB and foster an environment where these unique sites are better supported, valued and enjoyed by our communities and visitors. This joins match funding already secured from the Cornwall Heritage Trust, Cornwall Council, the National Trust and the Cornwall Archaeological Society.



ST PIRAN'S CHURCHES: WIN SOME, LOSE SOME

Adrian Rodda is an Honorary Vice-President of CAS, as well as being one of the most experienced Area Reps. Here he reports on various churches dedicated to St Piran:

St Piran had three churches dedicated to him in the Parish of Perranzabuloe. The oldest, known as the "Oratory" is probably on the site of Piran's original 6th century church, a wooden structure, with monk's cells around it. However the existing building is now dated to the Norman Period and may have been contemporary with the early years of the second church. The "Oratory" was overcome by sand by the 12th century and a second church was built over the stream where, it was hoped, it would be beyond the reach of the sand dunes. The land was possibly already sacred. The second church was originally the same size as the "Oratory". This in its turn was buried by sand blows and abandoned in 1805, when much of the stonework was recycled in a new parish church at Perranzabuloe.

A recent visit to the Medieval Church dug out of the sand amongst the dunes revealed that some of the carefully placed lime plaster along the walls had fallen. I wonder if it had been deliberately levered from the wall or had fallen through weathering. The church was dug out under the direction of Dick Cole in 2005 and conservation work by a specialist firm included the plastering of the internal North wall as it may have been. Traces of white plaster had been revealed during the excavation.



Photo Adrian Rodda



Photo Adrian Rodda



Photo Adrian Rodda

The “Oratory” was dug out in 2014 and conservation work in 2019 consolidated the walls. One problem was that vandals could get over the concrete bunker and walk on the top of the Norman walls and kick off rocks. To seal the wall tops turves were planted along them and held in place by hessian nets, which would eventually rot away.

Although the site has flooded this winter again, it is drying out and the turves have apparently held the wall together well and survived the winter.



Photo Adrian Rodda. Aug 2019.



Photo by Sam Boston. August 2020.

Report by Adrian Rodda

BETWEEN YOU, ME AND THE GATEPOST

Andrew Langdon (Federation of Old Cornwall Societies and CAS AREA Rep) has been very observant on recent walks in Blisland parish and here he draws our attention to a feature that tells us about past farming practices:

An example of agricultural archaeology is the slotted gateposts found in the Cornish countryside, particularly in moorland areas.



Fig 1 – Slotted gatepost built horizontally into stile at St Pratt's Cross, Blisland at SX 1039 7309. Photo: Andrew Langdon

I was first introduced to these gateposts, by the late Frank Smeeth of Culloden Farm, Camelford, who had examples on his land. Frank, a keen local historian recorded many examples during the 1980s in the parishes of Advent, Lanteglos, St Clether, Davidstow, North Hill, and Lesnewth, to name just a few parishes he visited.

These were gateposts to fields, where instead of having a five-bar gate which opened and closed, the landowner would slide wooden bars or poles between the two slotted posts.



Fig 2 – Slotted gatepost, broken and lying down near Tregenna, Blisland at SX 0937 7393 Photo: Andrew Langdon

These gateposts were popular in north Cornwall and on Bodmin Moor, and were also quite common on Dartmoor and Richard Hansford Worth described four different types in his book on Dartmoor in 1953. Worth called them 'Slip-bar' gates and recorded examples of 'double slot gates', 'slot and L gates', 'slot-and-arc gates' and 'locked-bar gates'. The Cornish examples are usually the 'double slot gates'.

Recently, during walks in the parish of Blisland, I have come across several examples, one still in use as a gatepost on the south side of the village green at Blisland, another, built

horizontally, as a step to a stile, just behind St Pratt's Cross, and a pair to a field entrance near Tregenna, on a footpath to Pendrift.



Fig 3 – Slotted gatepost near Tregenna on the opposite side of the entrance to Fig 2. Photo: Andrew Langdon.

These slotted gateposts were not a practical solution for entrances to farms, as if one was on horse or riding in any wheeled transport, it would mean getting off, removing the bars, riding or driving through the entrance and replacing the bars. These gateposts would have been more popular for securing cattle in a field.



Fig 4 – Slotted gatepost on the south side of Blisland village green, now re-use to hang a metal gate at SX 0996 7320. Photo: Andrew Langdon.

I have no idea how old these gateposts would be, but I would be interested to know if there are any others in west Cornwall or in the Penwith area?

Report by Andrew Langdon, Nov 2020

Information can be sent directly to Andrew or to arearep@cornisharchaeology.org.uk.

‘CORBEL-IMY’ – WHAT A FIND!

In Search of Tywardreath is a vibrant local history group, led by Helen Barden. Although one of its main aims is to research the Benedictine priory, it is also interested in all aspects of the local past, from prehistory to modern times. Lockdown has interrupted progress but one of its members, Doug Bence, has used this time to establish a website: <https://tywardreath-uneartingthepast.co.uk/>.

Very recently, someone living in a neighbouring parish made contact to say that they had discovered a piece of carved masonry, possibly a corbel, that might just have come from the priory. Group members (and CAS Area Reps) Sean Taylor and Dan Ratcliffe visited as soon as the Covid restrictions allowed and they were intrigued by what they found.



Photo: Dan Ratcliffe

They were excited to discover that the block is about a foot wide by 9 inches high and perhaps 18-24 inches deep and seems to be carved from Pentewan stone. Dan quickly produced a 3D model that can be examined interactively. This can be seen here: <https://skfb.ly/6WZvD>. He adds: *‘As you can see if you rotate the from the model so you’re looking up at it (see below) the corbel sticks out of a slightly skewed / splayed face of an otherwise rectangular block aligned with the corbel, which I suspect must be a clue – window reveal or door jamb perhaps?’*

Dan has consulted various local archaeologists and historians about the likely function and origin of this fine piece of carving.



Photo: Dan Ratcliffe

One of the experts consulted was Dr Alex Woodcock, an expert on medieval carving and masonry, and author of *The King of Dust*, who has generously sent his initial thoughts on the stone which are shared here:

INITIAL THOUGHTS ON THE CASTLE FARM STONE FRAGMENT

The carved head seems to have the remains of a quite distinctive hairstyle which was commonplace for men's hair from c.1250–1400, which would place the stone broadly within the Decorated Gothic period. The hair is worn long over the ears and makes a kind of S-shape, curving around the ears to end in a curl at the nape of the neck.

Some comparative pictures to help illustrate:

1. Lincoln Cathedral, Angel Choir c.1256–1280



Photo: Dave Hitchborne/Creative Commons via www.geograph.co.uk.

Outstanding 13C carving here, moving into the realm of the so-called 'portrait' head as it does in some places in the late 13/early 14C but the style of hair with the bunched 'S' wave is clear.

2. Exeter Cathedral, presbytery roof boss 1301–1302, and giant corbel head, west end of the choir 1310s (poss. 1312–1313)



Image: Mark Ware

The above is likely to be the head of the trickster Marcolf, a legendary character from medieval folklore, and possibly carved by the mason William of Montacute who may well have also done the very similar corbel head below (as he's known to be at work here during both these periods).



Image: Mark Ware

3. Winchelsea, St Thomas, south chapel sedilia c.1300–1320

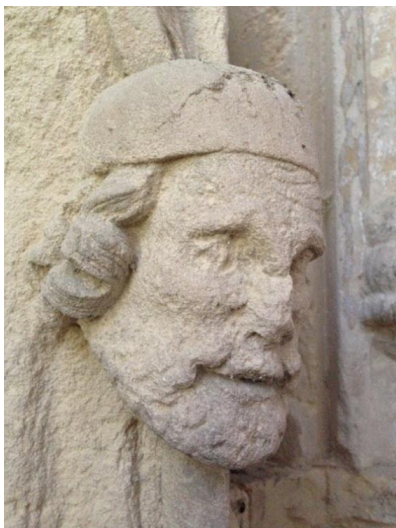


Photo: Alex Woodcock

This is what the curved hair looks like from the side and also how high up it may appear in relation to the rest of the face. Date is approximate but there's a good article in the Church Monuments Society journal a few years ago that dates it in detail (think 2007? I don't have it to hand) but within this time range if my memory serves me correctly.

4. Hanwell, Oxfordshire, arcade capital c.1340s



Photo: Michael Garlick/Creative Commons via www.geograph.co.uk

This is interesting as it pairs the hairstyle with an octagonal shaped capital with quite plain mouldings similar to the Castle Farm fragment – so we might be approaching a more suitable date around the middle of the fourteenth-century? Though in some cases styles linger longer in parts of the southwest than other places.

Also, from about the 1330s this hairstyle begins to die out in favour of much longer hair for men. Too much upkeep?!

The more puzzling question is the architectural piece generally as those lines and slopes are unusual. Door jamb is possible or window opening. Again, I'll have to research this a bit more to have anything more to offer.

This is an exciting discovery but as yet it can't be connected to any particular building but the quest is on!

You may enjoy exploring these links:

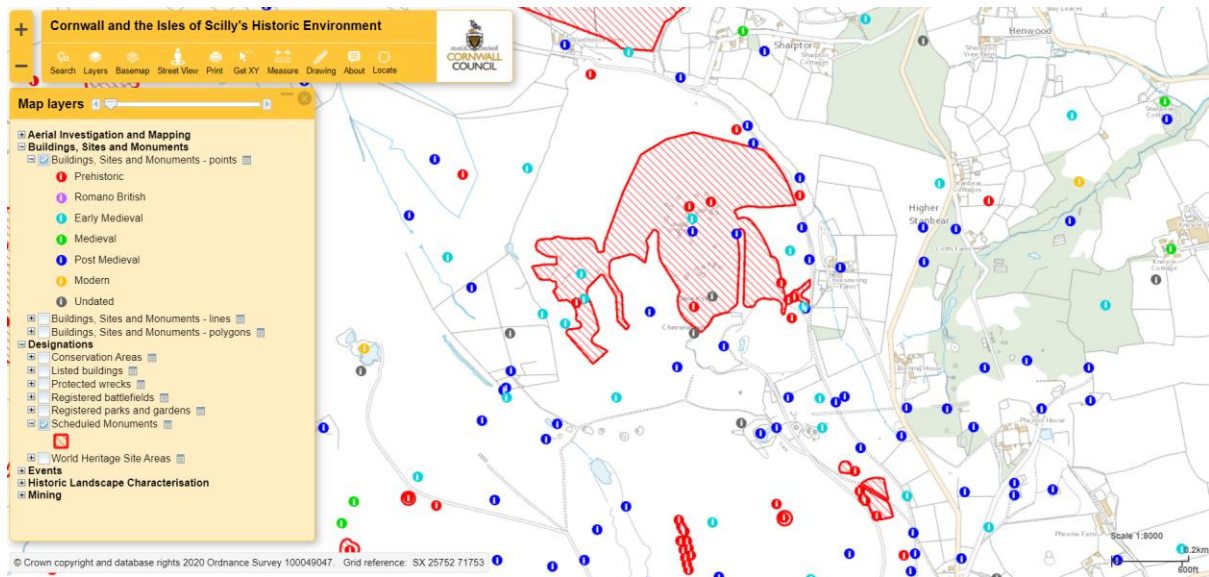
Alex Woodcock's website is at: <https://www.alexwoodcock.co.uk/>.

Dan Ratcliffe's website is at: <http://www.statement-heritage.com/>.

RETURN OF THE STONE STACKERS

This year's lockdowns and restrictions have made many people more appreciative of the pleasures of the great outdoors. Stowe's Hill, near Minions, not surprisingly, draws many people to it and who can blame them? The trouble is that some visitors don't realise that the stones encircling the hilltop on this Neolithic tor enclosure are protected as part of its Scheduling. As this recent photo shows, stone stacks are once again being built. All right, it is not the most heinous heritage crime and a sense of perspective mustn't be lost, but it is illegal and deserves to be discouraged. Let's hope that gentle education will coax the stackers into being content with the views, fresh air and archaeology of wonderful sites like this rather than mis-using them for inappropriate 'creativity'!





Source:

https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=7&xcoord=225575&ycoord=72511&wsName=CIOSt_historic_environment&layerName=Scheduled%20Monuments:Buildings,%20Sites%20and%20Monuments%20-%20points

Stowe's Hill (and much of the surrounding area) has Scheduled Monument status because of its unique archaeological significance.

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, 13th December 2020

