# FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS

## Updates from Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives



## OCTOBER 2021

**Issue 59**

## THIS MONTH'S FEATURES



## HERITAGE AT RISK REGISTER 2121

Historic Britain has just released its latest register and this is available online. In a separate project, historians have been poring over the registers from the last century and are stunned at the contrast with modern ones. Nationally, the largest site type this year relates to the Motor Age, especially showrooms, petrol stations and car parks, with airfields coming a close second. These redundant features are of interest, besides providing a chastening reminder of how close the world came to climate catastrophe a hundred years ago.

As was the case in 2120, no churches, houses, bridges or prehistoric earthworks are on the register for the south west. All are safe and loved. One feature of modern registers, namely the annual Good Stewardship Awards, shows how attitudes to the historic environment have evolved. Cynics might say that the generous grant funding now available to land and property owners is reward enough but surely the initiative and dedication of those proprietors who have personally and lovingly supervised restoration of assets ought to be recognised? This year the top awards were for barrow preservation, sensitive conservation work at china stone mills and an imaginative re-use of a public convenience that had become disused as part of the puzzling austerity policies of the early 21st century.

The 50-strong Historic England team based at Kresen Kernow has once again produced a lavish, readable publication. With their colleagues in Cornwall Council's Historic Environment department, they have devised a long term archaeological research strategy that is being pursued on (and under) the ground by Cornwall Archaeological Unit. It seems

that in the 21st century archaeologists had to chase after work on sites earmarked for development by private companies – incredible! Now any intervention follows a clearly thought out long-term strategy. The outreach programme spearheaded by the HER team continues to feed into local education, with the curricula in schools, colleges, university and adult education reflecting the pride in local landscape, buildings and other features.

Now that planning decisions are dependent on favourable recommendations from stakeholders representing the historic and natural environment, the development blight of the previous centuries has ceased. One or two large housing developments, and examples of early 21st century 'Grand Designs chic' (basically a cross between a ski-chalet and furniture showroom, with lots of glass), distant from towns and originally dependent on car-use, do feature on the register. Many of these properties have collapsed and have been engulfed by vegetation, providing useful habitats for a variety of creatures. But to allow them all to disappear would mean that we would lose the chance to understand and study the curious 20th and 21st century phenomenon of building houses speculatively for profit rather than addressing local needs.

Although not mentioned in this document, the economic benefits of this enlightened approach to local heritage, in terms of employment, skills and boost to local businesses, including tourism, have been thoroughly documented elsewhere. Local NHS Trusts have noted an improvement in mental and physical wellbeing resulting from the better conservation of the historic and natural environment and also from the increased opportunities for volunteers to get involved with their local sites and monuments.

All right, that's enough dreaming. Here's this year's register…

## HERITAGE AT RISK REGISTER 2021

If you are interested in getting a national overview this website is very useful: https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/ . Not only does it present national trends but it also has very useful advice for owners of assets that are at risk on how to obtain support, including grants. For those of you with spare millions and an interest in taking on big projects, there is a list of Buildings at Risk that are up for sale.

Nationally, 233 historic buildings and places have been saved, which is pretty impressive when the disruption caused by Covid is taken into account. The report makes a point that many politicians have failed to grasp, namely that looking after the historic environment isn't just good for the quality of our lives but that it makes good economic sense too:

*'Looking after and investing in these historic places is key to the country's economic recovery. The buildings and places rescued from the Heritage at Risk Register can help level*

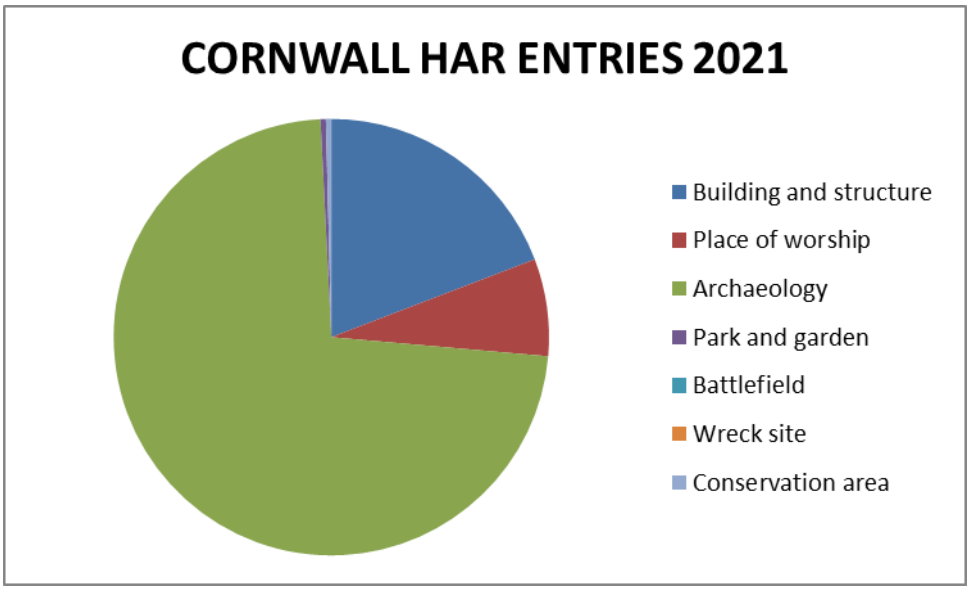
*up economic opportunity, support skilled local construction jobs, build resilience in private and public organisations and boost tourism.'*

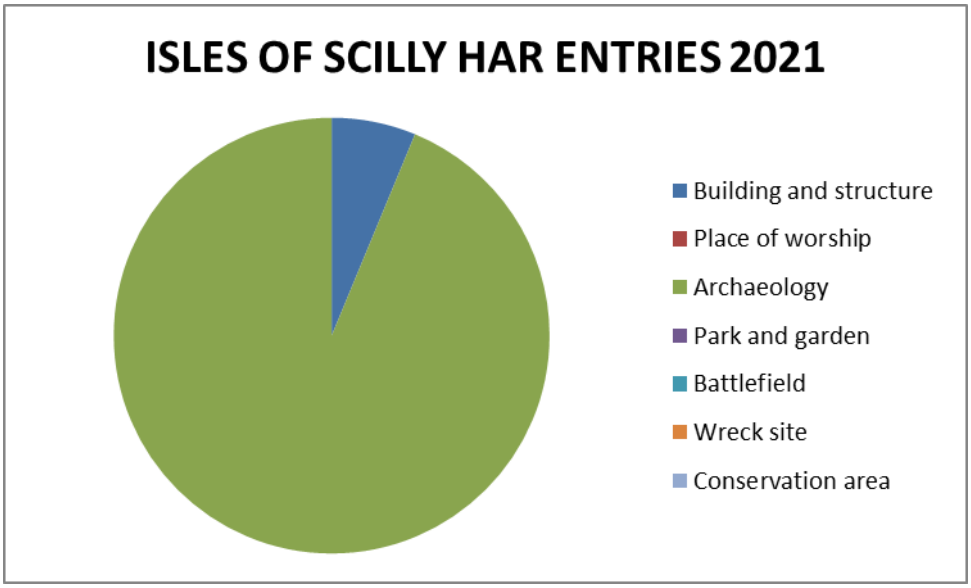
Doing so is also the 'green' thing to do:

*'Reusing historic buildings and taking care of our building stock, speaks directly to addressing climate change.'*

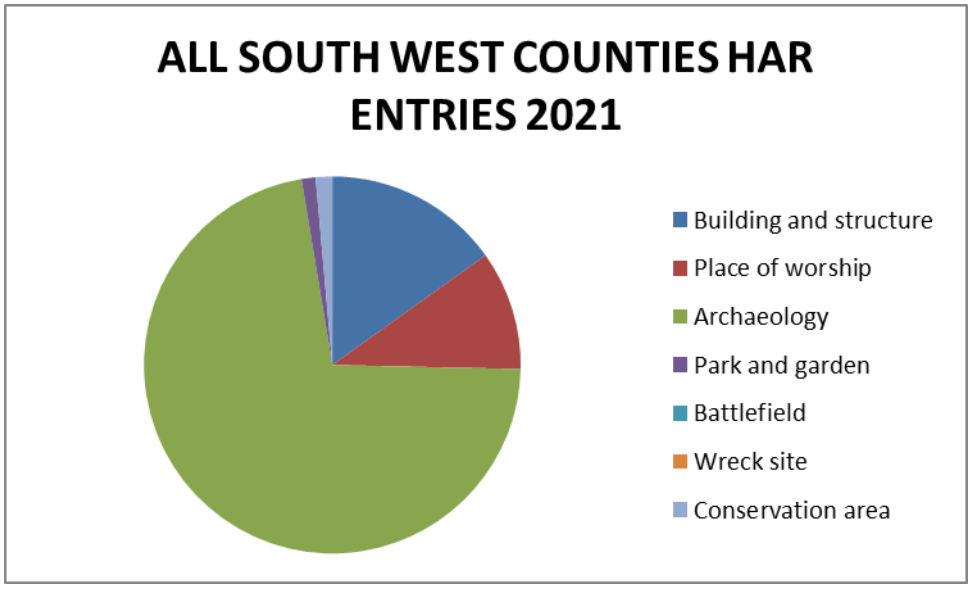
In the South West, there is good news – '*77 historic buildings and sites have been saved'.* On the other hand, *'31 have been added to the Heritage at Risk Register because of concerns about their condition.'* But, just like confessing to the dentist that a tooth hurts, the first step to solving a problem is often admitting it, so placing a site on the Register should not necessarily be seen as a bad thing.

The following charts show that for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, sites of archaeological importance are at the greatest risk. Buildings and other places of worship make up a worryingly high proportion. The energetic vigilance of Paul Holden and fellow members of the Cornwall Buildings Group is vital in this regard and their website can be found at: https://sites.google.com/site/cornishbuildingsgroup/home . (There are Facebook and Twitter accounts too.)






The overall position for the South West is indicated in the next chart:




For information about the South West, go to: https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/in-your-area/south-west/heritage-at-risk-2021/ . The Register itself is here: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/har-2021-registers/sw-har-register2021/ .

A lack of funding means that there is now only one Historic England Heritage at Risk officer to cover all of Cornwall. The county is lucky that this is Ann Preston-Jones, whose knowledge, dedication and energy are well-known, but the political decision to underfund historic environment protection speaks volumes about the nation's priorities.

The picture for Cornwall is complex, with some sites improving while others are stable or in decline. It's a sobering read in places but not without hope. For example, this local site has been saved:

Anchor Studio, Newlyn, was '*constructed in 1888 as a purpose-built studio for Stanhope Forbes (1857–1947), the father of the influential Newlyn School of painters, who used the building for more than 60 years'* and has been sensitively conserved with help from, among others, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, Cornwall Council and Arts Council England.

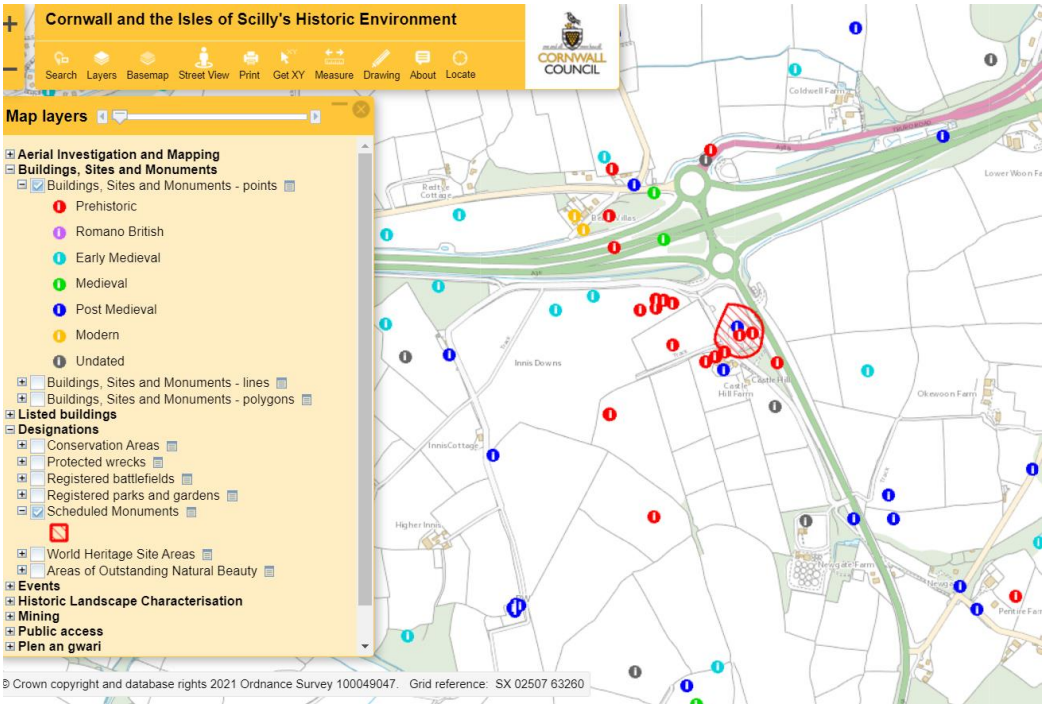
But 24 Foundry Square, Hayle, and the medieval packhorse bridge at Launceston, have been added to the Register. Both are of great historic and archaeological importance and in need of urgent conservation.

## CASTILLY HENGE

One entry on the HAR Register is the enigmatic, often overlooked Castilly Henge (Scheduled Monument CO110; SX 0311 6274; Luxulyan parish) near Innis Downs. Situated in mid-Cornwall near the junction between the A30 and the A391, many people pass close by but few are aware of its existence.


**South of the 2 roundabouts, the oval earthwork can be seen clearly from the air.**

A look at the HER (https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/conservation-and-environment-protection/strategic-historic-environment-service/cornwall-and-isles-of-scilly-historic-environment-record/ ) transforms the present scene into something different and far more exciting.




The earthwork is considered to be a Neolithic henge, with a possible re-use in medieval times as a plen-an-gwarry. Its ditches are deep and sharply cut with intriguing dips. In 1962 a CAS excavation led by Charles Thomas (see: https://cornisharchaeology.org.uk/volume-3-1964/ ) showed:

*'the southern entrance to be a later feature, produced by dumping material from the rampart back into the ditch. No internal features were discovered. Three flint flakes, one from the base of the fill of the ditch, and another from a buried land surface close to the northern entrance are the only Neolithic finds from the site. The ditches appear to have been dug in a number of short sections, a Neolithic technique, but the fill of the ditches had been carefully removed.'*

Nearly 70 years later it is possible to apply new investigative techniques without breaking the ground. It looks like a henge but the finds were sparse. No doubt it could have been re-used for plays but where's the evidence? A further suggestion, which arose from the presence of wheel ruts, was that there had been a temporary encampment by soldiers during the Civil War. So, three suggestions have been made but an aura of doubt about this enigmatic Scheduled Monument persists.

The good news is that Historic England want to make  a full topographic survey of the site which might be followed up with a geophysical survey from a local expert. There was one slight problem: despite clearance work a few years ago, the ditches and banks had become choked with bracken, brambles and triffids (well, some of those anyway). Luckily, Cornwall Archaeological Unit is managing a Scheduled Monument Management Programme with funding from Historic England. Pete Dudley and Cathy Parkes of CAU, and Ann Preston-Jones of Historic England, led volunteers from Cornwall Archaeological Society in a very successful operation. Now the ditches are completely clear, much to the great relief of the surveyors. More will need to be done to clear the banks before the surveyors return in January to complete their investigation.

**Attacking the western ditch.** **Photo: Pete Dudley**

**Previously the ditch was filled with vegetation** **Photo: Pete Dudley**

**Susan Boggis braving hostile vegetation** **Photo: Pete Dudley**

**The eastern ditch clear at last**

**Historic England surveyors Olaf and Elaine on the eastern bank – the next target for clearing** **Photo: Ann Preston-Jones**

## BRIEF BREVITA BRIEFING

The very first image displayed in the recent highly successful Joint Symposium *on Church Archaeology from c. AD 1000 to 1550 in South West Britain* organised by Devon Archaeological Society was of Lanlivery Parish Church, dedicated to St Brevita (or St Bryvyth). This fine building (HER 26894; Grade I Listed Building; SX 0798 5904; Lanlivery parish) was restored in the 1990s with help from an English Heritage grant and, the interior is not only rich in detail but is warm, dry and clearly the beneficiary of continued loving care from parishioners. As the name suggests, it sits in a Lan, and was once controlled by Tywardreath Priory.

Much of it is 14th century, although the tower is 15th century, and, as expected, Victorian restoration took place. Nonetheless, its medieval character is evident. For those wishing to follow the historic detective work undertaken in the 1990s by Warwick Rodwell, go to *Cornish Archaeology* 32 (https://cornisharchaeology.org.uk/volume-32-1993/ ).

If you were also intrigued by the photo in the Symposium talk, here are some photographs that might tempt you to explore the church and the lovely village and countryside of Lanlivery.

**Could you ask for a better view? Lanlivery church tower from the footpath near Roselath Farm.**

**Warwick Rodwell was able to trace how the shape of this building changed over time.**

**From high on the tower strange animals keep an eye on a changing world**

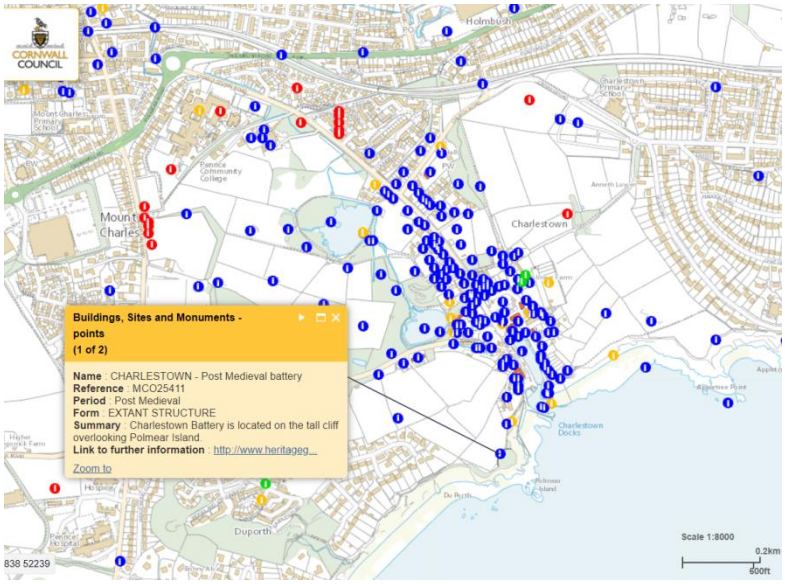
**Who carved these images?**

**A medieval stone coffin in the churchyard**

**Like to view the interior? You will have to enter through here to see more!**

# BATTERY RECHARGED

Our ports have been vulnerable to attack throughout history, as residents of places like Fowey and Newlyn found to their cost. For this reason defences have been built, such as the artillery battery (HER 20351; the wall is Listed Building (II) 397008; SX 0383 5135; St Austell parish) above Charlestown Harbour.



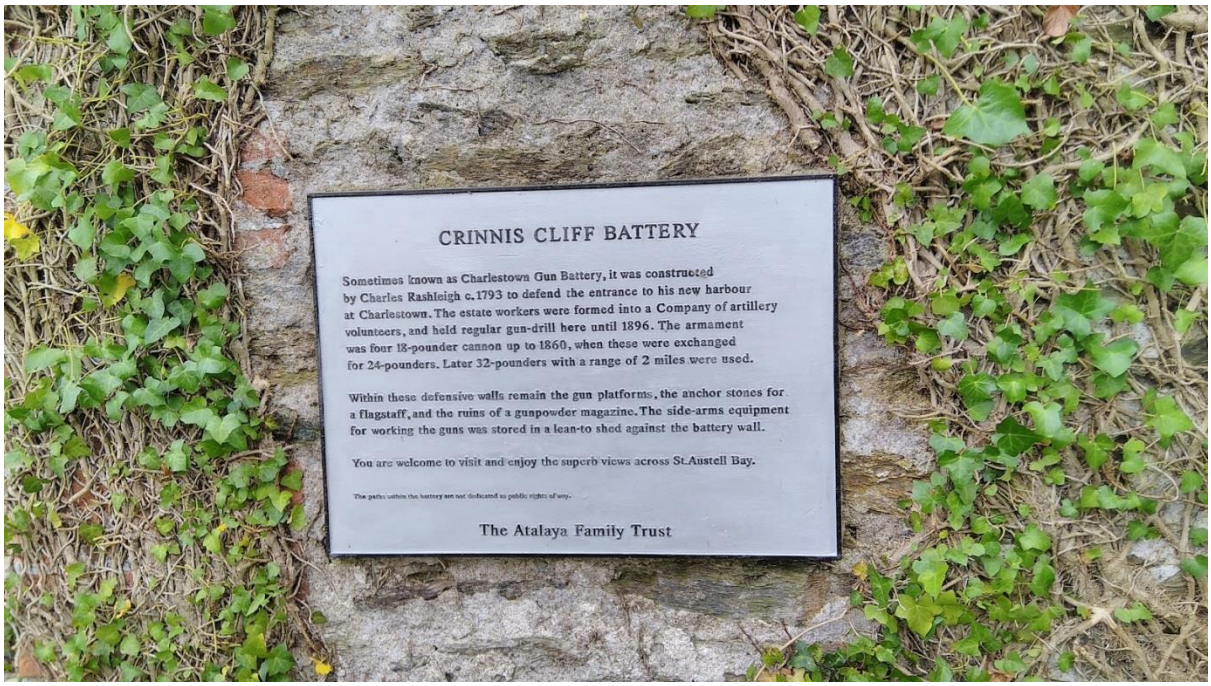

According to the Listing (https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=1289512&resourceID=5 ) Charles Rashleigh, who built the harbour, paid for this battery to be built in 1793, '*with the small cannon, shot and powder, and a regular army artillery sergeant provided by the Government. It was the only gun battery to be built specifically for a mineral port in Cornwall*.

*'In 1795 the Crinnis Cliff Volunteers were formed as a single company under Captain John Peter and survived for over a century in various forms. These included a merger with the Cornish Artillery in 1800 (from when it was formally known as Crinnis Cliff Battery); and in 1805 when French invasion seemed imminent, the formation of the Crinnis Cliff Company of Volunteers which comprised solely men in Rashleigh's employment, amounting to around 92 in number. At this time the cannon in the battery were four 18-pounder guns mounted on wooden garrison carriages. During bad weather and in the winter the guns were stored in a shed in the village (Grade II-listed). Called out by the fife and drum men, the Volunteers would drop their tools, change into their uniforms and load each gun onto a horse-drawn cart, or 'dilly'. Scaling the hill to the battery - probably across the fields rather than by today's coastal path - a large wooden door on the rear (west) side of the surrounding wall was opened, the cannon lowered onto rollers and*

*then manhandled to the granite platform at the east of the battery. The process was repeated for each cannon, accompanied by all of the necessary equipment needed to load and fire the guns. Practice and competitive shoots were common, but the battery never fired a shot in defence, other than in 1840 when a British man o'war appeared in the bay with no ensign flying.'*

During the 19th century various changes were made to the battery which was abandoned in 1898, although the flagstaff was shown on the 1907 OS map. After that: *'During the Second World War a look-out was mounted here; this was its last use. The battery has been in its current ownership since 1996 with a period of clearance and recording taking place in around 1998. In 2001 the site won a parish Civic Commendation for further conservation work at the site.'*

Recently, sharp eyed local resident Dave Burrell noticed that the battery, which had become overgrown, had been cleared by a large group of hard-working volunteers. As the photos showed, they have done a first class job.




**Access from the adjacent coast path is permitted.** **Photo: Dave Burrell**

**The interior side of the landward wall.** **Photo: Dave Burrell**

**No vegetation hides the appproach of Bonaparte** **Photo: Dave Burrell**

**Looking inland towards Charlestown and the clay country Photo: Dave Burrell**


**No, it wasn't destroyed by an explosion! Photo: Dave Burrell**

**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, 19th November 2021