

FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS

Updates from Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives

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Issue 44

THIS MONTH'S FEATURES

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- **THE TWIN PEAKS OF GOSS MOOR**

MYSTERY OBJECTS FROM LAWRENCE HOUSE

Diana Sutherland is a CAS Area Rep and a volunteer at Lawrence House Museum in Launceston. Here she describes how they have been coping with lockdown and shares with us some objects that they are trying to identify:

Lockdown for Lawrence House Museum, Launceston has resulted in a small two sided paper, called *The Carrier Pigeon*, to stimulate the interest of the stewards, museum workers and others. There is also a weekly Zoom meeting, run by the curator, to activate our brains.

On several weekly sessions sundry items are shown that have been handed to him for clarification in the forlorn hope that we would be able to fill Anna Tyacke's place as PAS Finds Liaison Officer for Cornwall.

Some objects have been relatively simple, e.g. remains of handles of discarded pots, coloured glass etc. However, a couple of interesting items appeared, one of which was a double of something rescued in the late 19th century from the roots of the ancient tree at Old Tree, Trebursye [Launceston, SX 308 843]. This had a delightful explanation "...it was at first thought to date from before the Christian era and to have been used for libations of blood upon a Druidical altar" - rather more fun than "... believed to be an 18th century dish for cooking purposes". However, it is a rather strange cooking dish having been made from a single piece of polyphant stone, carefully chamfered and weighing 3.2 kg (7lbs). The replica shown below recently turned up in a small local hamlet. It is more damaged than the one already in the museum but its size and appearance is identical.

Has anyone come across something like this?



Photo: Diana Sutherland



Base - view

Photo: Diana Sutherland



Base - side view

Photo: Diana Sutherland



Handle - end view

Photo: Diana Sutherland



Handle - side view

Photo: Diana Sutherland



Drawing of object found at Old tree, Trebursey, by Otho Peter

The second item was a piece of stone, rough on one side but concave and smooth on the other.

Sadly, none of us are geologists but we presume it is shillet.

The side view looks like hard stone is sandwiched between softer coverings. The concave surface is smooth and the convex surface rough like undamaged stone.

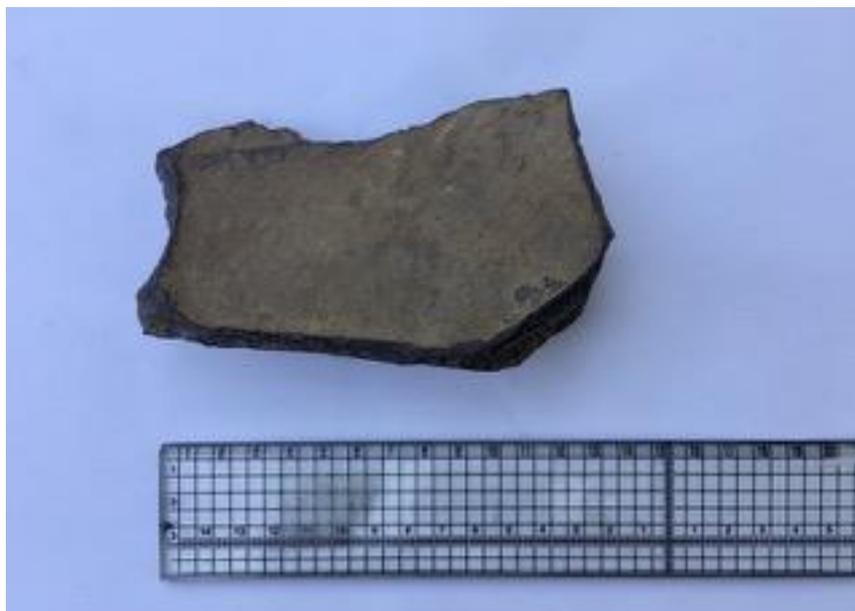
It looks rather like a Google picture explaining a rubbing stone quern. Could this be part of a quern?

Any other ideas?



Base view

Photo: Diana Sutherland



Top view

Photo: Diana Sutherland



Side view

Photo: Diana Sutherland

If you can help with identifying these objects, please contact:

lawrencehousemuseum@yahoo.co.uk

Text and photos by Diana Sutherland

Lawrence House Museum is temporarily closed because of the pandemic but check the website for updates: <https://lawrencehousemuseum.org.uk/>.

DETECTIVE WORK AT CARNMOGGAS

Very recently, Ian Thompson of the Milestone Society (<https://www.milestonesociety.co.uk/>) was contacted by the clerk of St Ewe parish council about a roadside stone at Carnmoggas in St Ewe parish (SW99204 49141) with the letter 'A' on one face and 'E' on the other. It was not on the Historic Environment Record but that did not put him off. Here, Ian tells us about his detective work that followed:

The stone is situated on the west side of the road, just south of the road junction and field gate. It is 25" high, 10" wide and 8" deep. The east face is carved with a 62 high letter A, and the west face is carved with a 6" high letter E.

I understand that much of the land around here was owned by the Mount Edgcumbe estate, whose name is carved on some of the nearby farm buildings, though subsequently much of the land was tenanted Cornwall Council land. It seems likely that the carved E stands for Edgcumbe.

Consulting Lake's Parochial History of Cornwall suggests that the other big landowner in St Ewe was the Aundel family of Lanherne, which would link with the carved A.



Boundary stone east face, inscribed 'A'
Photo: Ian Thompson



Boundary stone west face, inscribed 'E'
Photo: Ian Thompson

Thomas Martyn's county map of 1748 shows the roads which run north of the point where the stone now stands were unenclosed - the roads are shown as dashed lines, but the road to the south was enclosed by walls or hedges - solid lines. The first Ordnance Survey 1" map of 1813 and Greenwoods 1" county map of 1827 show all three roads to be enclosed. This may give an indication of the date of the stone, noting that it stands clear of the hedge bank on the west side of the road just south of the junction. It would be very useful to see the St Ewe tithe map and apportionment of 1839.



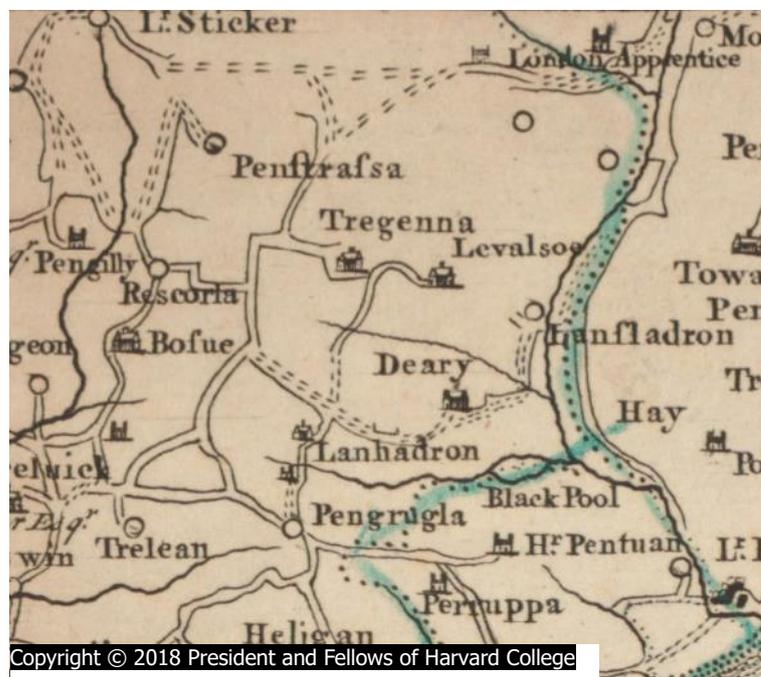
Boundary stone location looking north

Photo: Ian Thompson

Text and photographs by Ian Thompson

Thomas Martyn's Map of Cornwall can be found at:

<https://library.harvard.edu/onlineexhibits/baroque/martyn1748.html>



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Cornwall's Historic Environment Record is constantly being updated by people like Ian who report new discoveries. Anyone can do this using the monitoring form at:

https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/41111750/her_smr_recorders_form_2016v1.doc.

For more information about Cornwall Council's Historic Environment Service, visit their excellent website at: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/strategic-historic-environment-service/cornwall-and-scilly-historic-environment-record/>

PRAYERS ANSWERED AT CHANTRY CHAPEL

Despite being a Grade II* Listed Building and A Scheduled Monument, the 14th century chantry chapel of St Thomas Becket (SX 0736 6702) in the churchyard of St Petroc's Church in Bodmin has suffered badly from vandalism in recent years. The crypt was used as a drug den, masonry and tombstones have been smashed, and it has been misused by local youngsters, sometimes drunk or under the influence of drugs. This is in addition to more natural problems such as ivy growth, crumbling masonry and so on.



Smashed tombstone and masonry, December 2015

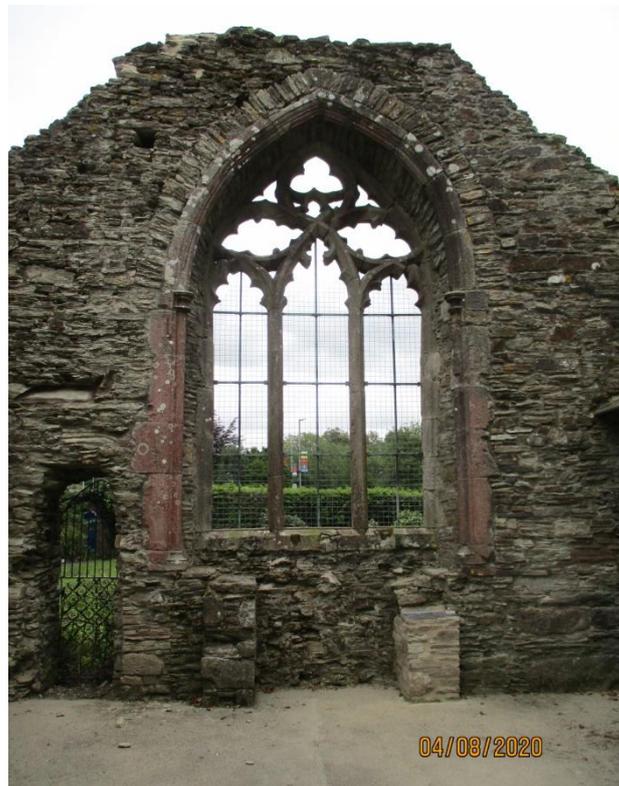


Ivy on the west wall, August 2017

Now things are looking better. The determined efforts of Ann Preston-Jones, Historic England Projects Officer, to protect and conserve this important building are paying off. Besides enlisting the support of Bodmin Town Council, the church authorities and volunteers from CAS and the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies, she managed to obtain funding from Historic England for surveys, vegetation clearance and structural repairs. These were carried out with great skill by Heritage Cornwall (<https://www.heritagecornwall.co.uk/>) and are now complete.



The ivy has been removed from the west wall



The eastern window and masonry nearby have been restored

Ann says: 'All the ivy and small trees have been removed and the especially vulnerable bits of stonework have been stabilised. The north and east windows have been protected with mesh, carefully inserted into the grooves around the windows where original glazing must have been set. This has been done in a way that will hopefully not cause damage to the stonework if it is vandalised. But it is reasonably secure for now.'



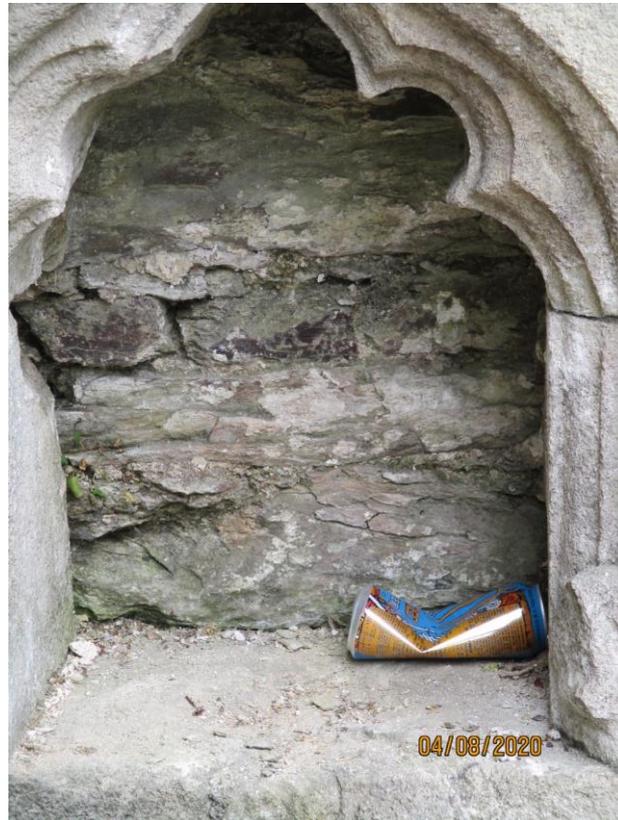
Window mesh should stop people climbing in and out



The interior after maintenance work by Heritage Cornwall

More needs to be done but that requires more money. Water still leaks into the crypt, certain walls need examination and some of the stonework is crumbling. However, the building is a lot safer and more stable than it has been for a long time.

With the ivy removed local people are now more aware of the chapel. This might mean they will keep an eye out for misbehaviour by youngsters. Vigilance is necessary, including a greater police presence. So far, the evidence of recent misuse of the structure is confined to small amounts of litter:



But it is wonderful to see the improvement in the condition of the building.

THE TWIN PEAKS OF GOSS MOOR

On either side of the wet, low-lying expanse of Goss Moor are two intriguing Iron Age hillforts: Castle-an-Dinas to the north, on a broad, gently sloping hill; and to the south, St Dennis, smaller and more conical, with the church tower peeking through the trees on its summit. Between them runs the busy A30. This part of Cornwall feels like a land apart, framed by the hills of Hensbarrow, Denzell, Belowda, Rosennanon and St Breock Downs. But even in prehistory it was never cut off. People could pass through the boggy moorland from west or east on a route that may have preceded modern roads; and it wouldn't have taken too long to reach Trevelgue cliff castle at Porth, or the Camel estuary, to connect with the wider world.

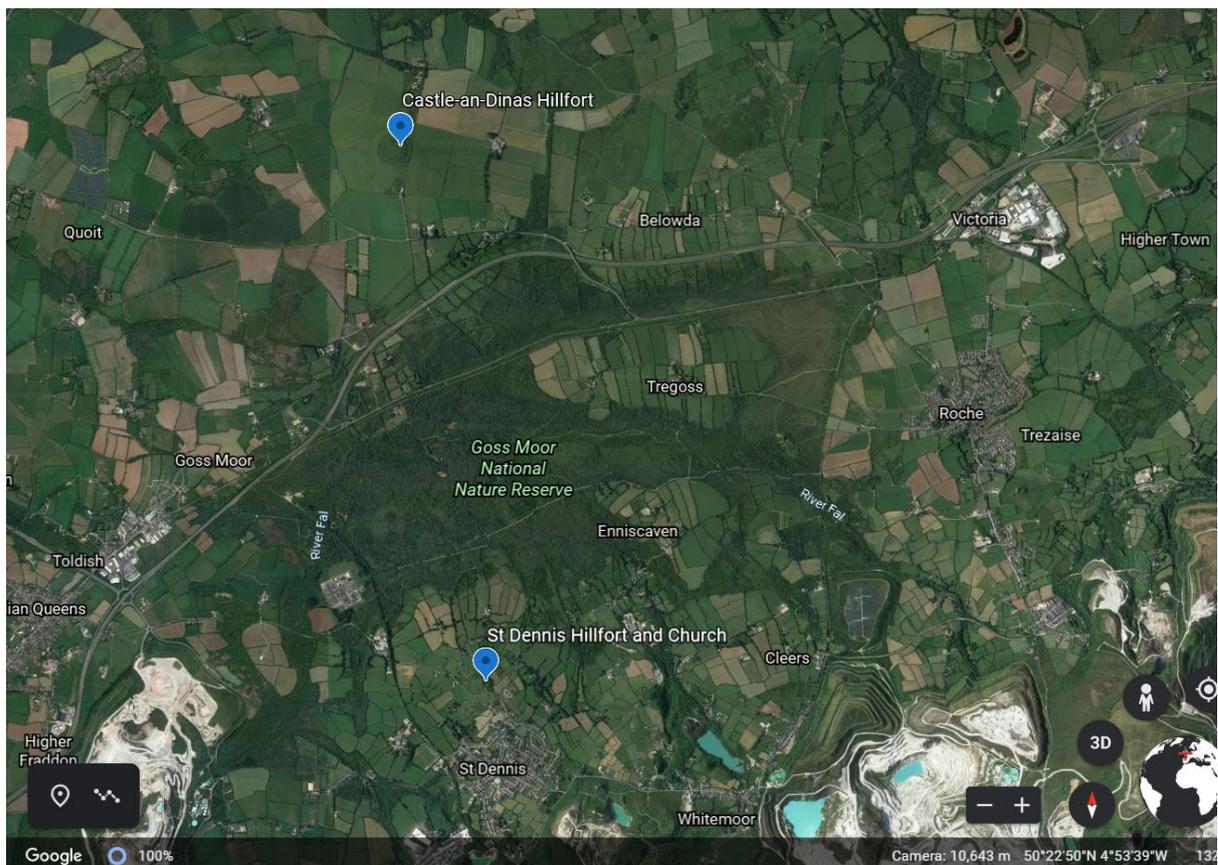


Image taken from Google Earth

What would life have been like in and around these twin peaks during the Iron Age (600 BC to AD 43)? Were the hillforts the seats of powerful rivals, with the boggy scrubland of Goss Moor acting as a barrier, like Korea's 38th Parallel? Did chieftains' war chariots burst forth from the gates of each fort to repel trespassers? (Perhaps rushing oligarchs are not new.) Or did these places fulfil less militaristic, more complex functions? These are big questions. There are many detailed reports on the subject, often quite technical, but this is a rough and ready attempt at an overview. Believe it or not, such recklessness is positively encouraged by no less a person than Barry Cunliffe:

Reconstructing social systems from archaeological evidence is notoriously difficult and there are even those who believe that it cannot or should not be attempted. Such views are defeatist. Indeed it is essential for the archaeologist to look beyond potsherds, post-holes and distribution maps, and to

attempt to discover something of the social mechanisms which held together families and allowed them to work in harmony with similar groups to form the larger community (Cunliffe, 1995).

Well there you are – he’s almost insisting that someone has a go (although maybe he would choose someone else to do it).



St Dennis (left) with its crown of trees and Castle-an-Dinas to the right

Castle-an-Dinas is one of Cornwall’s larger hillforts. There are 4 ramparts, one of which, number 3 (you count them outwards from the innermost), may be late Bronze Age in date but the others are placed firmly in the Iron Age. The views from here are spectacular, access is easy and it is managed well by Cornwall Heritage Trust (see https://www.cornwallheritagetrust.org/our_sites/castle-an-dinas/). Walking around it produces feelings of elevation and space. Limited excavation was carried out by Bernard Wailes in the early 1960s (Wailes, 1963, 1964, 1965). Finds were few but included South West Decorated pottery. His archive is now being examined carefully. More recently, a geophysical survey of the site was conducted by English Heritage (Sharon Bishop, 2011). At least two Bronze Age barrows were identified in the centre and these would have been intervisible with other barrows on the surrounding hills. Maybe they provided useful points of reference within the landscape. Certainly it suggests that the hilltop was significant before the Iron Age and that its barrows were respected by the builders of the fort. Very little evidence of long term occupation was found; in fact just one roundhouse. The surrounding slopes, known as Castle Downs, were unenclosed until the 20th century and would have been rough heath and grassland in prehistory.



Looking from the ramparts of Castle-an-Dinas towards Belowda and the hills beyond



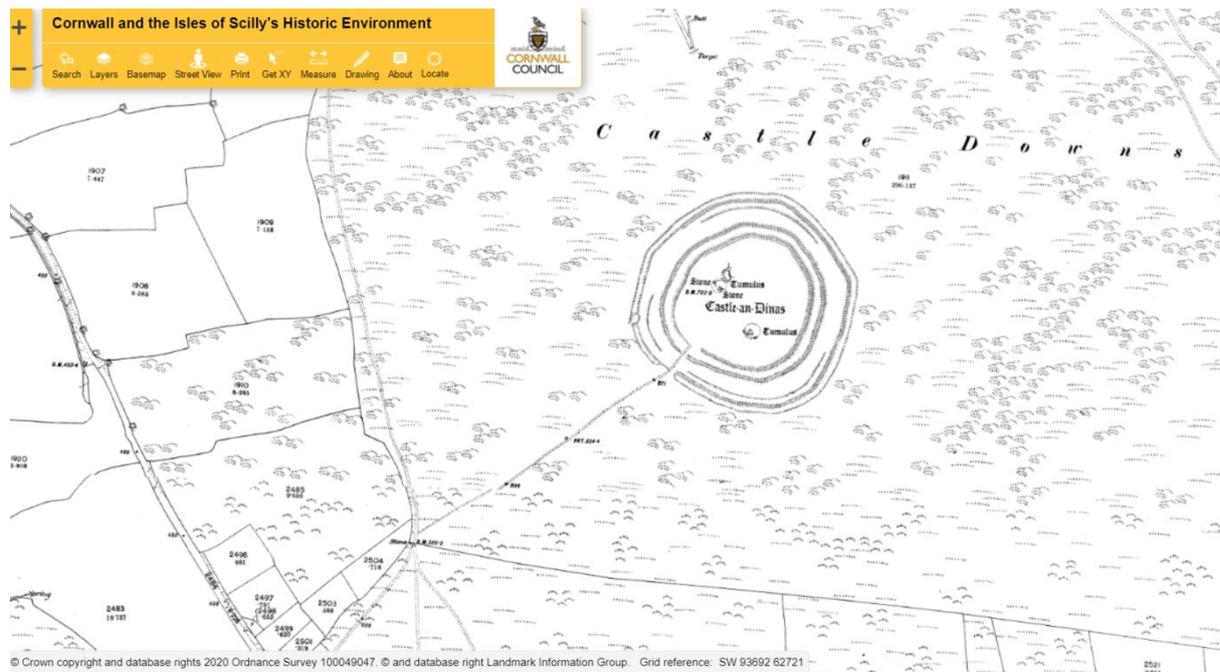
View of St Dennis from Castle-an-Dinas



Looking beyond St Columb Major to the north coast from Castle-an-Dinas



Castle-an-Dinas from the south of the A30

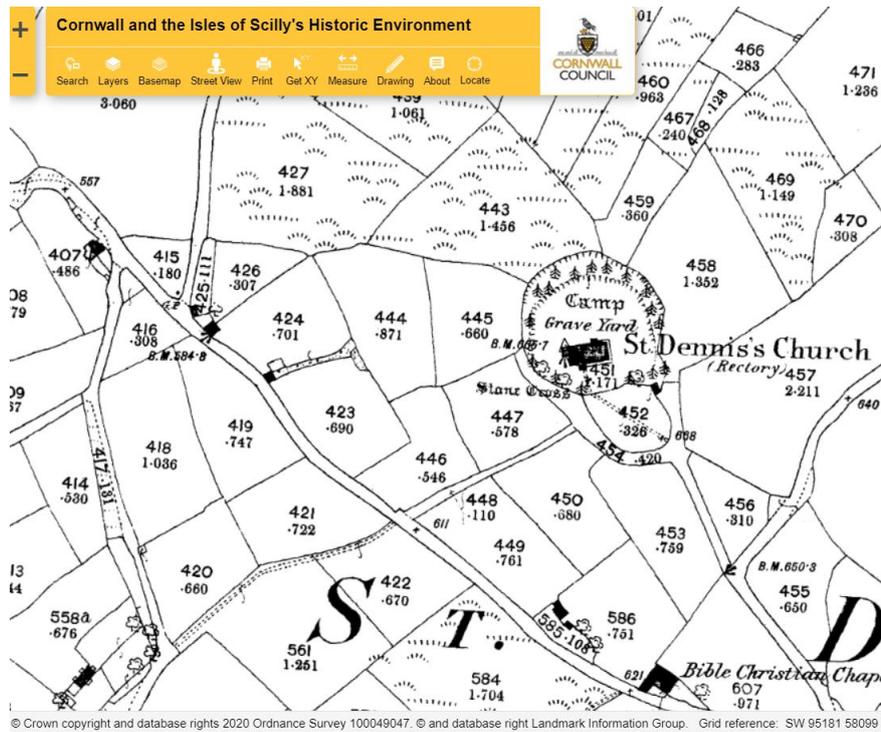


Castle-an-Dinas, as shown on the 1880s OS map

https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=8&xcoord=194495&ycoord=62323&wsName=CIOS_historic_environment&layerName=

The English Heritage report states: *'It is located at the watershed of rivers linking it with both coastlines, close to the boggy moorland basin of Goss Moor and rich mineral deposits, the exploitation of which perhaps added to its mystique, Castle-an-Dinas may have occupied a no man's land between territories and provided a defined space for different groups to come together within a range of local, regional social, economic and political networks'* (Bishop, 2011)

Moving south, St Dennis churchyard now occupies the area within the inner rampart of what had been a bivallate fort. It is likely that the churchyard wall, rebuilt in the early 19th century, is on the footings of the inner rampart. Charles Thomas conducted an excavation in 1962. He suggested that the name of the site in the Early Medieval period was Dimelioc (from *Din*, signifying a fort, and *Milioc*, a person's name) and that the dedication of a chapel, later the parish church, to St Dennis (of Paris!) arose from confusion with 'an dinas' – the fort. His excavation identified a second, outer, rampart that had still been visible in 1849. This was found about 15 metres from the inner rampart (the foundation for the current churchyard wall) and in its original form was probably a drystone revetted earth bank with a small ditch. Thomas was sure that although it was much smaller than Castle-an-Dinas, it was nonetheless a hillfort, rather than a round [a settlement within a single rampart], and he dated it to the 1st and second centuries BC. Following the tragic arson attack on the church in 1985, Steve Hartgroves conducted a small excavation but no evidence of pre-Norman activity was found.



St Dennis, as shown on the 1880s OS map

https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=8&xcoord=194495&ycoord=62323&wsName=CIOS_historic_environment&layerName=

This is a magical spot. Enter through the churchyard wall, now overgrown with mature trees, and immediately the world beyond is left behind. On Castle-an-Dinas the wind can howl and visitors are forced to walk at improbable angles, but St Dennis is sheltered and compact, snug even. Its distinctiveness in the landscape, particularly as you view it from the north, is muted by the backdrop of massive china clay spoil tips, but in its heyday, especially with the stone of its ramparts glistening in the sun, it would have been unmissable. The tiny, stone-walled fields on the lower slopes look prehistoric, yet date from the early 19th century. Until then, the land downslope from the outer rampart would have been open grassland, as at Castle-an-Dinas. An intriguing cross, probably in its original position, can be found close to the south door of the church. Some consider it to be evidence that the hillfort was re-used as a churchyard in the Early Medieval period, although Charles Thomas thought it was 11th century.



At St Dennis, trees and a thick boundary wall keep the world outside



Castle-an-Dinas viewed from within the churchyard wall/inner rampart of St Dennis



St Dennis churchyard wall was rebuilt in the early 19th century on top of the inner rampart



Charles Thomas's excavation (roughly here) proved the existence of an outer rampart

Archaeologists now shy away from defining Iron Age hillforts as purely military features but what were they for? What can we say about the surrounding settlements and landscape in the Iron Age? Pete Herring's article in *Cornish Archaeology* 50 provides a very helpful summary:

'Hillforts, 'central, communal places' (Quinnell 2004, 211-5) gathering places and perhaps the occasional courts of those who organised local society, were also established in prominent and significant places...The numerous, less archaeologically visible unenclosed settlements suggest that this was an essentially peaceful time with much the same area of Cornwall under productive agriculture as in the eighteenth century AD. Mixing of rounds and open settlements within the same areas...hints that differentiation of settlement form reflected some other variable than defensive need, the most likely being status. 'Defences' may have been analogous to medieval crenellation, with the right or licence to erect such a distinctive and understandable display being in the gift of a widely respected local authority. If so they seem now as they may have seemed then to represent a landscape that contained, among other things, power and position. An interpretation of the dominant settlement form (virtually all households being grouped into small hamlets) and associated regular brick-shaped field systems (in which households' holdings may have been intermixed to share potential and risk, to share the good and the bad, in a way familiar from medieval arrangements), suggests that the land was also seen as shared, as a communal space where households cooperated.

'Adding to the sense of a stable society working a fully organised land is an appreciation that the uplands continued to be used for summer grazing...with households split for half of the year as some of their members accompanied flocks and herds to the hills, milking them and processing the proceeds...

So the basic rural pattern of settled areas, fields and commons, and even the highways and by-ways that linked and gave access to them, with which we are familiar, may not have been forged in the early and later medieval periods as Hoskins and his followers presumed, but rather were inherited from later prehistory...' (Herring, 2011).

The location of both hillforts close to mineral-rich Goss Moor, where the exploitation of tin may well go back to prehistory, may be important. Clark and Forman's 2009 report, on excavations in advance of road improvements, says of Castle-an-Dinas *'Its location above Goss and Tregoss Moors perhaps hints at involvement with tin extraction.'* Two roundhouses were excavated at Lower Trenoweth (SW 9613 6145) and Belowda (SW 9692 6148). These would have been contemporary with Castle-an-Dinas. Radiocarbon dating showed they were occupied between c 250 BC and AD 100. The excellent popular booklet explains that: *'Both roundhouses were 12 metres in diameter, and they had low dry stone walls with an east-facing doorway. The roofs would have been made of thatch. Charred fragments of heather and straw were found, both of which are suitable for thatching. Around each house was a gully to collect rain-water from the eaves.'* Interestingly, according to the main report: *'There are, however, some indications that they may not have been ordinary, domestic structures, but rather may have played a more specialised role...Given the evidence for possible stock enclosures near to the Belowda roundhouse, and the almost complete absence of any other finds at either roundhouse, it is tempting to suggest that the roundhouses were temporary shelters, either for animals or humans, which formed part of a system of transhumance, rather than a permanent settlement'* (Clark and Foreman, 2009). Not much pottery was discovered but it included Gabbroic ware, which may have come from the Lizard, which just goes to show that these people were able to make use of resources from beyond their home territory.

Nearby, pits, a hearth and a ditch were thought to show signs of tin processing from the Bronze Age. Pollen discovered in a palaeochannel to the south west of Belowda Lane was dominated by grass and sedge, with some evidence of *'cereal pollen grains, of barley or wild grass type, and wild or cultivated oats or wheat [which may] suggest some cultivation was being carried out nearby'* (Clark and Foreman, 2009). Less cereal pollen was found from the later Iron Age; why – what had changed? Tree pollen was mainly alder and hazel, with oak and birch also represented. Small amounts of heather were noted as well.

Excavations a few miles to the west at Penhale in 1992-1993, revealed a round (with the most eastern example of a fogou found so far) that dated from the later Iron Age and which might be similar to rounds in the Goss Moor area (Johnson, Moore and Fasham, 1998-9).

Now to less scientific evidence: folklore celebrates both hillforts. William of Worcester (in the 15th century AD) reported the tradition that Arthur's mother and Tador, or Cadur, Duke of Cornwall, were killed here, hinting faintly at an early medieval re-occupation.

William Hals (1655–1737) stated that *'at the edge of the Goss-moor, there is a large stone, wherein is deeply imprinted a mark, as if it were the impress of four horseshoes, and to this day called King Arthur's Stone; yea, tradition tells us they were made by King Arthur's horse's feet, when he resided at castle Denis, and hunted in the Goss-Moor. But this stone is now overturned by some seekers for money.'*

Some think that St Dennis was the Dimelioc mentioned in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (1130s). According to this story, Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, placed his wife Igera in Tintagel Castle to keep her safe from the unwelcome and insistent attentions of King Uther. Merlin enabled royal desires by giving Uther the appearance of Gorlois, so fooling Igera into thinking that her husband had come to stay with her. The details of this disgraceful episode are unsuited to this article but suffice it to say that Arthur was the end result (yes, that Arthur). Meanwhile, back at

Dimelioc, Gorlois, unaware that he had been both impersonated and cuckolded, sallied out of the fort to fight Uther's men and was killed. Some antiquarians say that Castle-an-Dinas would be a better fit than Tintagel in this story. Beunans Meriasek' [the life of St Meriasek], a 16th century miracle play, places one of the castles of the Duke of Cornwall at Castle-an-Dinas, in Pydar Hundred.



The *in situ* churchyard cross. Does its presence here reflect the ancient importance of its location?

Well these are great stories. Perhaps the chroniclers and authors of the play tapped into oral traditions that were rooted in the Early Medieval period. But can they be taken as solid evidence that both Iron Age hillforts continued as important centres of power into later times? Maybe, but you wouldn't want to bet on it.

Let's get back to the Goss Moor area in the Iron Age. Beyond the open grass and heathland on the higher land and the boggy land below, there would have been settlements connected to either hillfort, or both. The two forts may have been places where communities gathered, perhaps to trade, plan, debate, drink, feast, compete in games, be entertained, conduct rituals, make marriages and listen to the Druids and Bards. Objects from far afield may have been traded, perhaps brought by outsiders travelling inland from Trevelgue, or the Camel estuary, or maybe along the trans-peninsular track. The produce of the Goss Moor area, including tin, could have been available too. There may have been fighting. After all, where groups of young men gather, especially when drink flows, punch-ups, or worse, are pretty well guaranteed, even now. More serious disputes may have led to larger scale violence at times but that doesn't mean that the earthworks had a mainly military function. To get an idea of what these hillforts looked like, Jane Stanley's reconstruction paintings

are well worth consulting (<http://www.strangehistory.net/2014/08/21/jane-stanley-paints-castle-dinas/>), as is Cornwall Heritage Trust's educational resource pack (<https://www.cornwallheritagetrust.org/learn/resources/teaching-resources/>) which has useful information for adults as well as children.



**Castle-an-Dinas from the wilderness of Goss Moor
After being heavily exploited by tin streamers for centuries (or millennia) nature
has reclaimed this area.**



Taken from about the same spot as the previous photo, here is St Dennis hillfort/church

Much of the landscape was settled, with open settlements and rounds. Small, brick-shaped fields, would have been adjacent to human habitation but beyond that was open land, heath, grass, and also (as now), low lying wet scrubland. Buildings in this more marginal zone were not necessarily permanently occupied but could have been used for transhumance or metal working. Intriguingly, and this may be pushing it a bit, wills from the early 19th century AD show a lifestyle based on farming and tin that might bear slight similarity to the lifestyle of Goss Moor people in the Iron Age, even though political, social, legal and religious frameworks had altered beyond recognition (<https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/county/cornwall?page=2>).

Of course, this article doesn't give an adequate, accurate portrayal of life in and around these hillforts during the Iron Age. But, hopefully, it is a start. Some of the excellent research available is listed below. Maybe readers will be tempted to explore the area, which has a rich legacy from many time periods, instead of whizzing through on the A30. Both hillforts are great places to visit and the Goss Moor Trail is wonderful – bikes can be hired at the Screech Owl Wildlife Park (<https://screechowlsanctuary.co.uk/>) and there is an excellent map of the Trail at https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3628638/GossMoorTrail_WelcomeMap.pdf

Sources:

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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, 6th August 2020

