

FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS

Updates from Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives

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DECEMBER 2020

Issue 49

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A NOTION OF CONFIDENCE

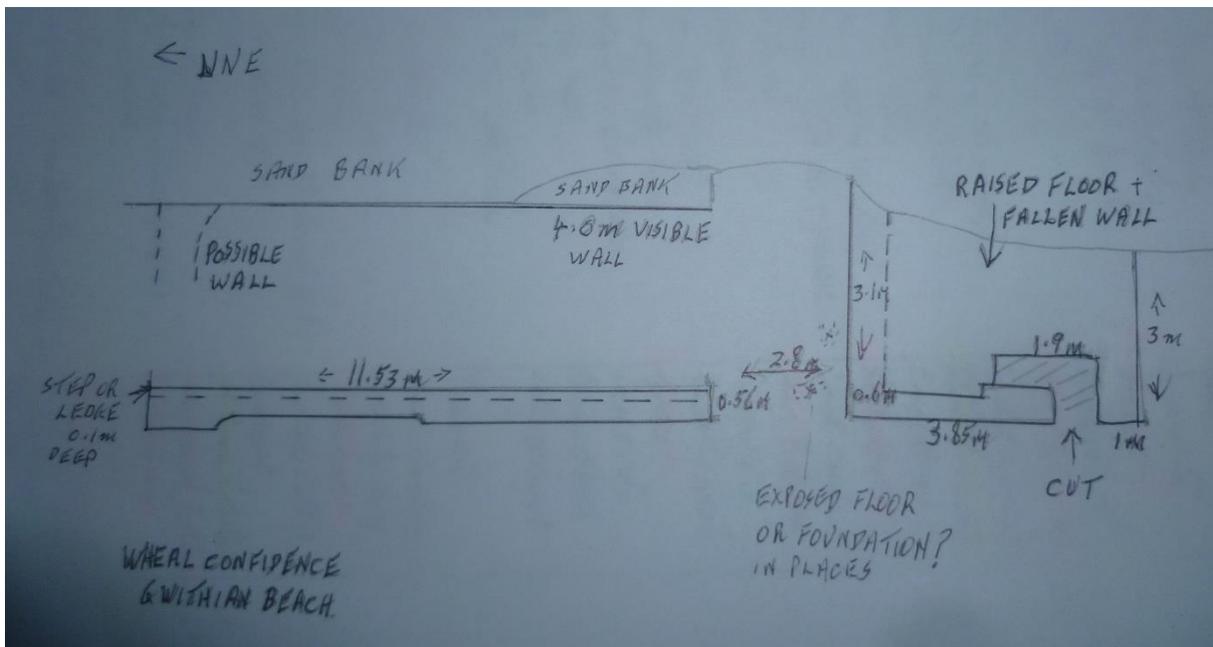
Adrian Rodda has been investigating yet more mysteries at Gwithian. With the help of CAS web manager Millie Holman he has uncovered evidence for Wheal Confidence. Here is his report:

The extreme high tides in November 2020 swept all the way up to the bank separating the nature reserve from the beach. The area below this sandy bank is covered by a massive spread of large beach cobbles. These are thrown about and moved at very high tide and this November the sea actually breached the sandy bank and sliced away some of the bank's face in one place of interest. It revealed more of a rectangular building that had caused some discussion regarding its purpose.



Photo: Adrian Rodda

With the help of the CAS web manager and Trustee, Millie Holman, I was able to measure and plan what was visible to us.



A discussion on Facebook in the Friends of Godrevy and Gwithian Page had been conducted after the building was revealed in February 2016. It had been known since the high tides of 1965/6. One of the contributors, William Toy, posted this map from the OS 6inch series surveyed in 1877 and published in 1887. <http://maps.nls.uk/view/101439194>



He also posted a letter dated Whitsunday 1966 from Prof Charles Thomas which included this information. He is writing to someone called Kenneth, whom I think may have been Kenneth Polmeor.

"You will recall we corresponded about the possible sitings of Wheel Providence, (R.C.G. 25.12.1819, 17.6.1820) and Wheel Confidence, (W.B. 15.7.1831.) I mentioned that in early, circa 1870s, photograph by Gibson's of the St Gwithian's Oratory clearly showed an engine-house chimney on the beach in the distance, i.e. some way north of Wheel Emily. You will be interested, I am sure, to learn that recent sand movements has at last revealed what seem to be this building, right out on the shingle bar between the sea and the sand removal area. Several courses, set in clay mortar, are visible of a fairly stout rectangular structure, and I think the remains of a chimney base at the N. end. "

Facebook contributors wondered if the mine used a horse whim rather than a powerful engine house. However, the page editor contributed in Feb 2016. "At the N end of the building the stonework does have a curved appearance, which would fit with a chimney."

Millie and I could find little evidence of a chimney, though there was a possible curve in the wall. The surviving visible stonework did not appear to be substantial enough to support a tall chimney. The walls were certainly set in mortar, but we could not see several courses. Whether courses were buried still or had been sliced from the top is a mystery. It might have been an engine house for Wheel Confidence which followed the lode exploited by Wheel Emily to the west at the top of the cliffs opposite the Lifeguard Station on the way down to the beach from the car park. This engine house is very small and was built to accommodate a Bull Engine which pumped directly over the shaft. Obviously much has been lost since 1966. We have no explanation for the ledge within the long sea facing wall or the cut. Can any of the Area Reps with more knowledge of engine houses help?



The S end showing the cut in the sea ward wall and raised floor inside. Photo: Adrian Rodda



The N end where a chimney was reputed to have been. The stones are well set in clay mortar. Photo: Adrian Rodda



The strange ledge or step along the wall and the niche on the outside. Photo: Adrian Rodda



Photo: Adrian Rodda

This mysterious building has not many seasons to survive, I fear. In fact I visited it again today, January 5th 2021 and most of it has been covered by sand again, either blown from the beach or collapsed from the bank.

The Gibson picture from the 1870s showing St Gothian's (or as Charles Thomas called it St Gwithian's Oratory.) The tall mine stack in the background is certainly on the beach and in the right direction for the building now revealed.



The Oratory is totally covered to preserve it and surrounded by two barbed wire fences. As Ann Preston Jones and I discovered some years ago the farmer had made it secure from his grazing cattle or any human investigators by not including a gate of any kind. But that is another story. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1006700>

Report and photos: Adrian Rodda.

DINGEREIN CASTLE STORMED – INVADERS REMOVED

As you may have guessed already, the invaders were plants rather than hostile warriors but they were very wild and put up determined, if vegetative, resistance. Sheila James, the local Area Rep took part in the clearance and has sent in the following account:

Dingerein Castle (SM 32935), in the parish of Gerrans on the Roseland is one of the sites included in the Cornwall AONB Monumental Improvement project. The state of the site had been causing concern for some time and was able to be added to the AONB project by the active involvement of Gerrans and Portscatho OCS. A project plan has been drawn up by Nev Meek of the OCS, the first stage of which is to clear all the scrub from the site. A first clearance day was held in February of this year when the ditch between the inner and outer ramparts was successfully cleared, giving the opportunity to walk through the ditch and appreciate its size and width for the first time in years.



Volunteers begin work on the inner rampart

Photo: Sheila James

Friday 4th December 2020 saw the second Dingerein Castle scrub clearance day. As before, the day was arranged jointly by Nev Meek of the OCS and Chris Coldwell and Jacob Parry of Cornwall AONB. James Gossip and Ann Preston-Jones supervised the OCS and CAS volunteers, who were necessarily a much smaller group than last time. The aim of the day was to complete the clearance of the inner rampart and remove any regrowth from the ditch.



The east end of the inner rampart before clearance. Photo: Sheila James



Looking NW along the inner rampart before clearance. Photo: Sheila James

The weather forecast had promised a keen north-west wind and possible wintry showers and it was a bit daunting to find frost patches in the grass when we arrived. Happily, the sun soon put paid to that and working in the shelter of the ditch became positively balmy! By lunch time the sides of the inner rampart were beginning to appear and the heaps of cut scrub were getting higher. Tom from Naturally Green [<http://www.naturally-green.co.uk/>], who was responsible for burning the trimmings, was having trouble keeping up.



Inner rampart being cleared

Photo: Sheila James



Burning the rubbish pile

Photo: Sheila James



East end of the inner rampart from ditch after the clearance

Photo: Sheila James

At the end of the day much of the scrub from the sides of the inner rampart had been cleared and a start made on tidying the regrowth in the ditch. It is now possible to see the actual outlines of the monument. The next stage of the project is for a survey of the site to be carried out by James Gossip. A further clearance day will be planned for February if it is needed.



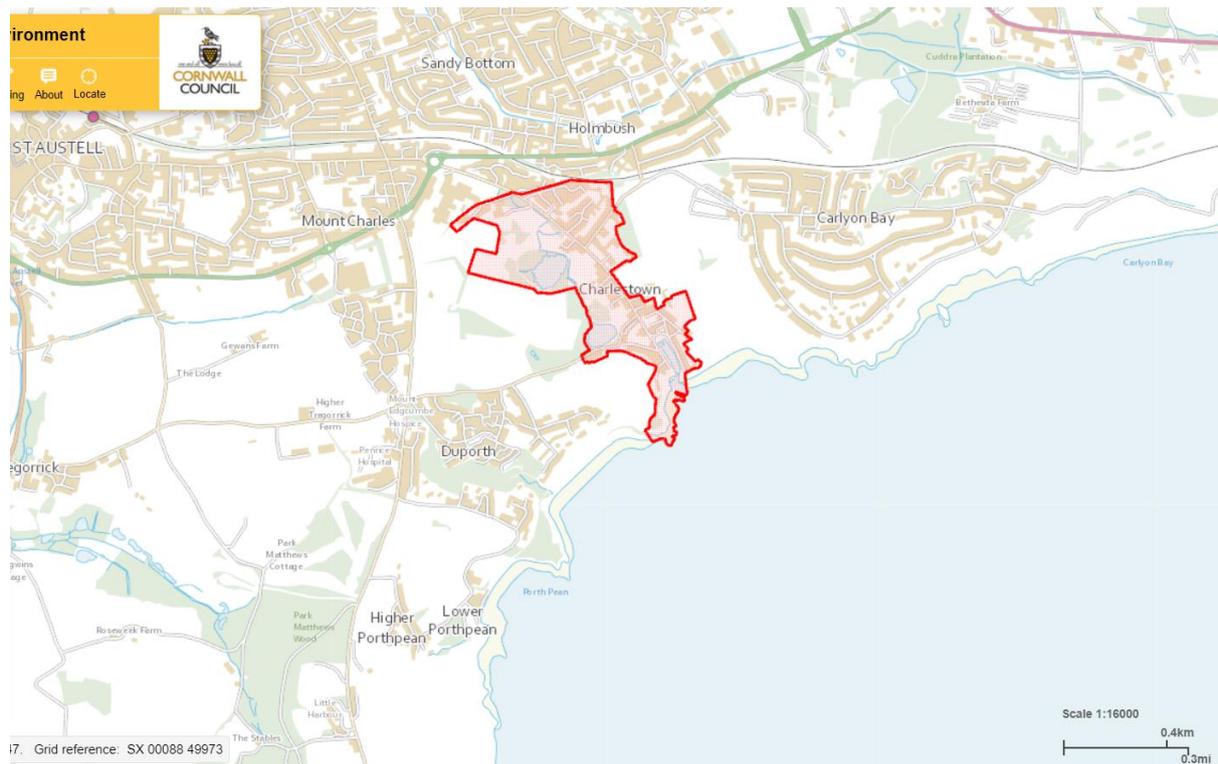
Looking NW along the inner rampart after clearance

Photo: Sheila James

Report and photos: Sheila James

THE CHANGING FACE OF DUPORTH

Duporth, near Charlestown, has had a varied past and change is still underway with new houses being built on the former estate. According to Heritage Gateway *Deubord* was recorded as a settlement as early as 1302. It combines the elements *dew* meaning 'two' and *porth* meaning 'harbour or beach', presumably a reference to the beaches at Duporth and West Polmear (now Charlestown).



Duporth is to the south of the World Heritage Site of Charlestown harbour.

Source:

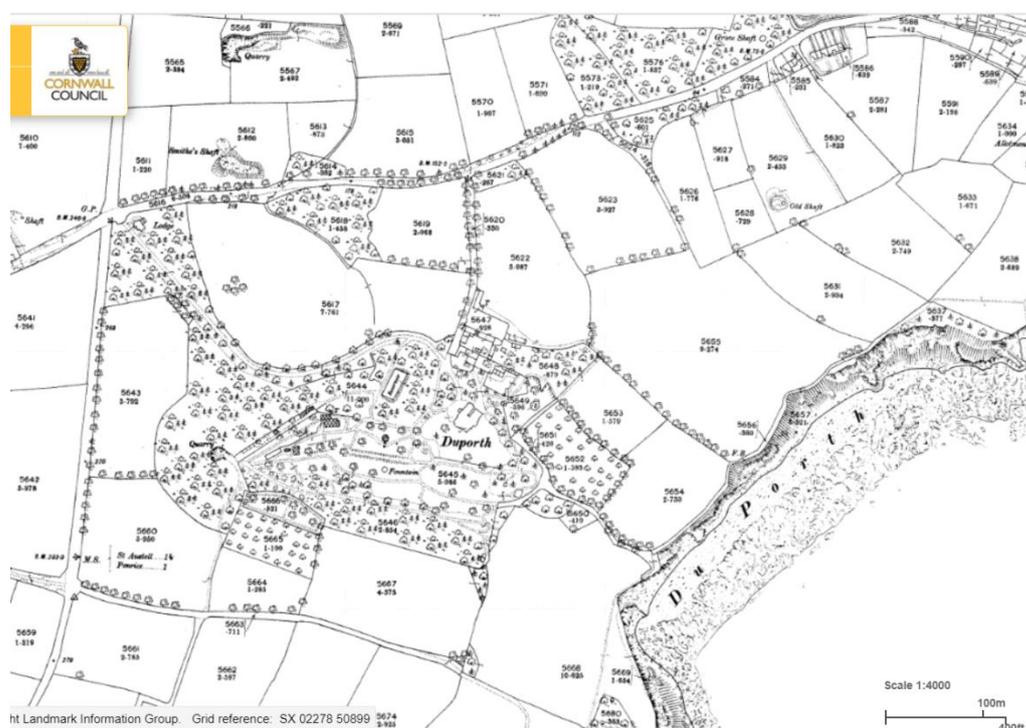
https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=6&xcoord=202831&ycoord=51493&wsName=CIOS_historic_environment&layerName=World%20Heritage%20Site%20Areas

At the end of the 18th century, during Cornwall's mining boom, Charles Rashleigh (1747-1823) transformed the cove at West Polmear into a thriving harbour and settlement that became known as Charlestown. Besides his town house in St Austell (now the White Hart hotel), he acquired land at Duporth where he built a house and created an estate. Richard and Bridget Larn in *Charlestown – The History of a Cornish Seaport* (Shipwreck & Marine, 1994) offer this glimpse of how the estate was created:

'One of his big undertakings was the planting of many hundreds of trees of a ll types and the creation of wind breaks around Charlestown and Duporth, introducing a wide range of

saplings from different countries. No one alive today could have seen Duporth garden at its best, its entrance and driveway a canopy of broad leaf trees of every type, with pines and conifers of gold, greens and blue-greys a wonderful contrast against the deciduous trees. Once there were any number of boweries, streams waterfalls and fountains, secret hidden places, summer houses, a splendid grotto almost the equal of that at Menabilly created by Philip Rashleigh. Other attractions, all joined by beautifully kept paths, winding through an abundance of shrubs and exotic sub-tropical flower gardens were fruit gardens, melon houses and walled-gardens...'

Although mature trees still exist in the area, Duporth House no longer exists, having been demolished in the 1980s. The 1880s OS map gives an idea of the layout of the estate:



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Source:

https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=8&xcoord=203012&ycoord=51279&wsName=CIOS_historic_environment&layerName=

In the 1930s the estate was turned into a holiday camp and was used as such until earlier this century, apart from a period during the Second World War when it was used by the Indian and US armies. In recent years it has become a residential development known as *Two Coves* as the following map shows:



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Source:

https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=8&xcoord=203012&ycoord=51279&wsName=CIOS_historic_environment&layerName=

Local resident and keen amateur historian Dave Burrell has been photographing historic features that survive and has very kindly shared some of the images from his collection.

The clock tower is a Listed Building and has been stabilised.



'The Leaning Tower of Duporth', July 2018

Photo: Dave Burrell

This is the official description of this Listed Building :

Early C19.

Tall square rubble clock tower. Small narrow round headed windows. Slate roof with ogee shaped bell turret. Clock labelled John Thwaites of Clerkenwell London 1806. Contains the works of the origin clock.



Restoration in progress

Photo: Dave Burrell



The restored clock tower

Photo: Dave Burrell

The next photo shows: the clock tower; holiday camp chalets; and modern housing:



Three phases of Duporth

Photo: Dave Burrell

Some holiday chalets have been kept and lovingly restored. Their tiny size is of interest to anyone studying how tourism has changed.



Chalets during decoration

Photo: Dave Burrell

Are the mature trees part of Charles Rashleigh's legacy?

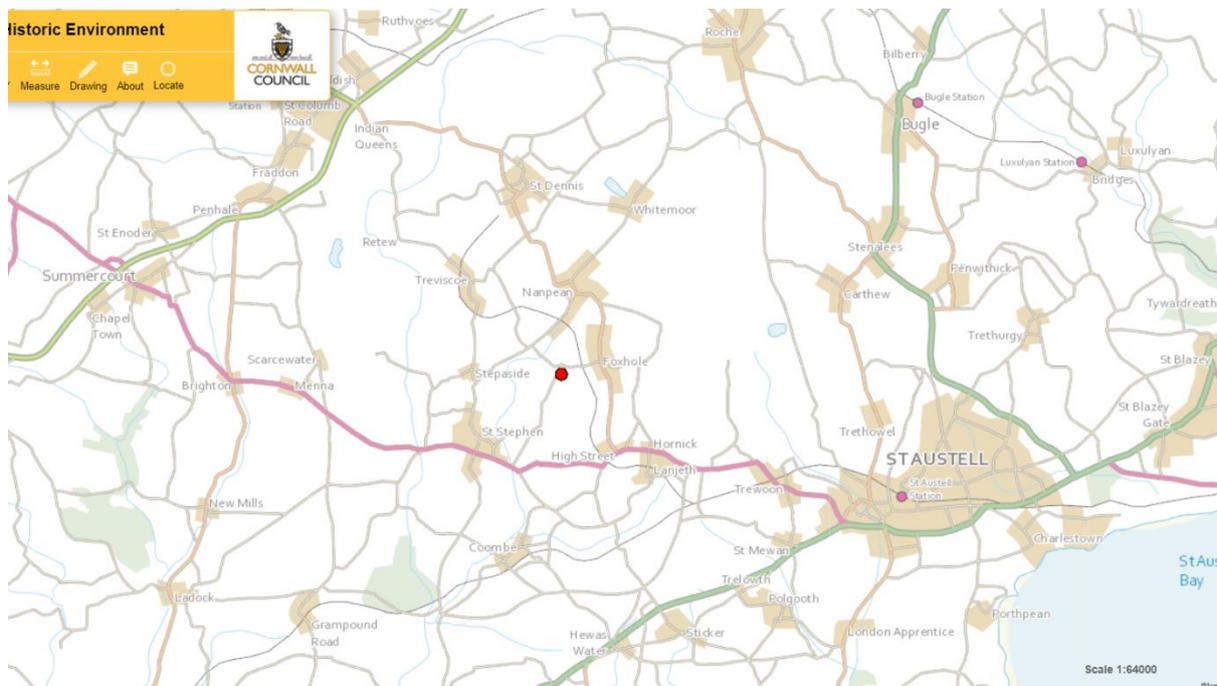


The tiny chalets in their new setting

Photo: Dave Burrell

FOXHOLE'S HIDDEN BEACON

Recently, CAS received an enquiry from a member of the public about St Stephen's Beacon, near Foxhole. This location of this overlooked Scheduled Monument is shown by the bright red dot on the map below.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100049047. Grid reference: SW 94477 48686

Source:

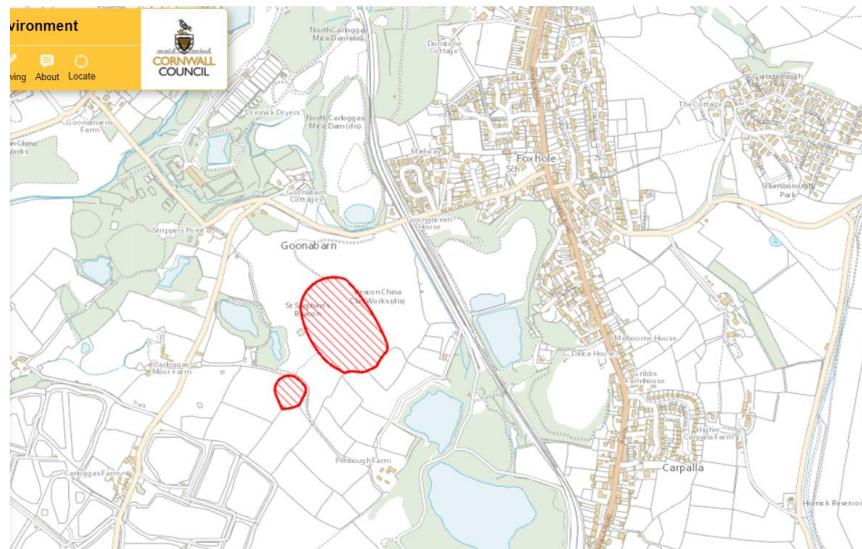
https://map.cornwall.gov.uk/website/ccmap/?zoomlevel=4&xcoord=194223&ycoord=54731&wsName=CIOS_historic_environment&layerName=

Given the absence to the untrained eye of obviously significant archaeological features, it is reasonable to ask why did this rounded, windswept hill become Scheduled?



The northern slopes of the hill make an impressive landscape feature.

The Historic England record explains that Scheduled Monument 1003091 is an 'Earlier Prehistoric Hillfort with Round Cairn'.



According to Historic England (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1003091>):

Earlier prehistoric hillforts are large fortified settlement sites dating to the Neolithic period (c.3500-2000 BC). They may be recognized by single or multiple rubble walls or earthen banks enclosing all or part of a hilltop. The boundaries often vary in size, incorporate numerous small entrance gaps and commonly include substantial natural rock outcrops and scarps in their circuit. Ditches, sometimes similarly with intermittent breaks, occasionally accompany the enclosing banks. The hillfort enclosures, up to 10ha in extent, usually contain cleared and levelled house platforms. The few recent excavations of this class of monument have revealed numerous internal timber and stake-built structures and pits associated with large quantities of undisturbed Neolithic settlement debris. Excavations have also produced evidence for warfare at some sites. Extensive outworks are associated with most of these hillforts, either roughly concentric with the inner enclosure or connecting a series of related enclosures.

The listing makes it very clear that this site is of huge importance nationally:

Less than twenty earlier prehistoric hillforts are known nationally, concentrated in the uplands of south-western England. They are a very rare monument type, highly representative of their period and one of the major sources of information on social organisation and interaction during the Neolithic period.

The area is Open Access and is well worth a visit just to enjoy panoramic views of a much-altered, fascinating clay country landscape. However, it is not an easy site to interpret. The following photograph shows the northern slopes from the access gateway. The edge of the Scheduled area coincides with the start of the rougher vegetation towards the top. At this point there appears to be a slight break in slope which may indicate remnants of an embankment, although it is very hard to be sure, especially when the wind is howling and your feet are getting wet!



The Listing details compensate for the absence of clear signs on the ground:

The monument includes an earlier prehistoric hillfort and round cairn, situated at the summit of the prominent hill called St Stephen's Beacon. The hillfort survives as a roughly oval enclosure surrounding the summit of the hill with an annexe to the north and is defined by a terrace or scarp of up to 7m wide and 2m high which has been partially fossilised in field boundary banks to the south. Other associated ditches, structures, layers, deposits and features will be preserved as buried features. The outer side of the terrace is partially revetted by large stones and marked in places by upright orthostats. The area of the hillfort has been the subject of mineral prospecting, evidenced by numerous pits. First noted in 1864 as being 'distinctly visible' and recorded variously as having between one up to three surrounding ramparts, the hillfort has been variously recorded as being of Neolithic through to Iron Age date. Within the enclosed area on the summit of the hill is a round cairn which was re-used as a beacon. It survives as a low, irregular spread of stones. The cairn was largely dismantled in 1853 when, according to Thomas, it actually measured up to 20m in diameter. The outer stone was removed and used to construct an engine house for Tin Hill Mine and, at this time, a lower platform of stones and a large cist containing ashes was

found and left in situ. Its re-use as a beacon is largely inferred from its very prominent position and place-name evidence of 'St Stephen's Beacon', 'Foxhole Beacon' or 'Beacon Hill'.

Sources: HER:- PastScape Monument No:-430107 and 430101

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1003091>



A lonely tree bent by the winds may mark the site of the cairn



Wheel ruts indicate recent activity on the hilltop. The possible cairn is in the background.

It is surprising that the hill has survived unscathed by the demands of industry for so long but at least it has some protection in law as a Scheduled Monument.



Looking north towards overgrown sky tips created by the china clay industry

This area has changed so much over the last two or three centuries. What was once sparsely populated, rough downland speckled with prehistoric features like barrows and menhirs has been transformed utterly by the mining and china clay industries. From the cairn on top of St Stephen's Beacon it would have been easy to see barrows on nearby hills, such as Watch Hill to the east. The latter has now been obliterated by the spoil of Blackpool clayworks but important excavations of the barrows were conducted beforehand by Henrietta Miles (now Quinnell) and these are available to read at:

https://cornisharchaeology.org.uk/journals/No.14_1975.pdf .



Looking south-east towards the tips that now cover Watch Hill

When we are free to travel again, a visit to St Stephen's Beacon is worth considering. It isn't fashionable, colour supplement Cornwall but it is part of an intriguing, rich multi-layered landscape that will fascinate the keen student of archaeology. And the views are great too!

STOP THAT PIGEON!

Andrew Langdon (Federation of Old Cornwall Societies & CAS Area Rep) has been investigating a rock fall near Trevanion Culverhouse. This is one of the properties cared for by Cornwall Heritage Trust and their excellent website provides a short description of the building (https://www.cornwallheritagetrust.org/our_sites/trevanion-culverhouse/). But just in case your 'culverhouse knowledge' is a little rusty, this is an excerpt:

'This well preserved 13th to 14th century dovecote (pigeon house), with its keystone finish roof, is thought to be one of only four surviving examples of its kind in Cornwall. The culverhouse was used to farm the eggs and meat of its inhabitants.'

Here is Andrew's report:

Trevanion Medieval Culverhouse, Wadebridge SAM 1004487

As Area rep, I was called up to Wadebridge on Tuesday 8th December 2020 after receiving a call about a rock fall on the road between Trevanion and Burlawn, which is just below the Culverhouse.



Photo: Andrew Langdon



Photo: Andrew Langdon

The rock fall appears to be the result of heavy rain and saturated ground above. The cliff edge is still 3 metres from the back wall of the Culverhouse, and hopefully there will be no more slippage.

Cornwall Heritage Trust, the owners of the Culverhouse are aware of the problem, as are Historic England.

I have received no more reports through December about the rock fall and due to Lockdown I have not been able to visit.

Report and photos: Andrew Langdon

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, 14th January 2021

