

FROM YOUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS

Updates from Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives

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JANUARY 2021



ISSUE 50

FREE INDEX TO ISSUES 1-50 WITH THIS EDITION!

THIS MONTH'S FEATURES

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- **CAM BRIDGES MYSTERY**

I never miss an edition



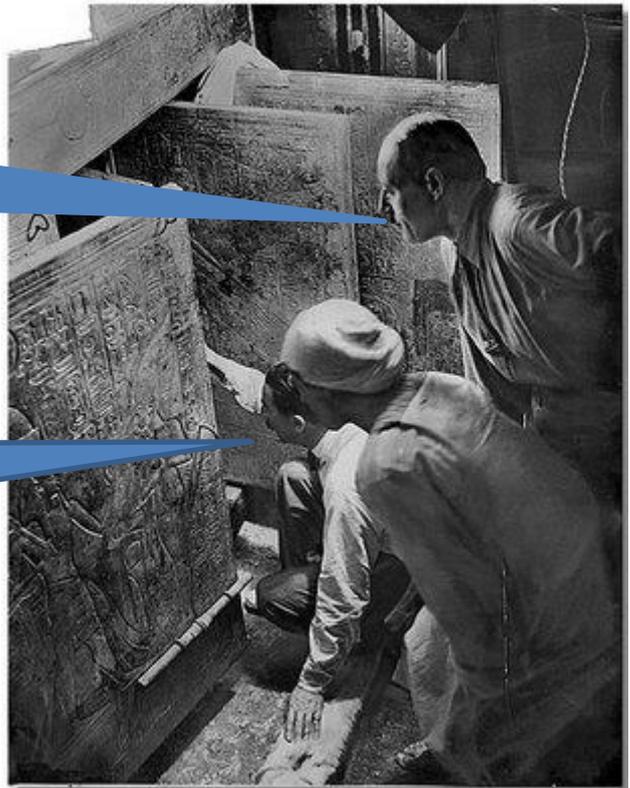
NOW WE ARE 50

At their autumn meeting in 2016, the assembled CAS Area Reps thought a regular newsletter about their work might be of interest. Peter Cornall, the Convenor at the time, gave it his blessing, and in December that year the first edition was produced. Since then, the Area Reps, now led by Iain Rowe, have been writing articles, sending in photos and passing on snippets of information, and the milestone of 50 editions has now been reached.

From Your Own Correspondents readers say....

Anything good in
FYOC this month,
Carter?

I see wonderful
things.



The support and encouragement of professional archaeologists from a wide range of organisations, including Historic England, Cornwall Historic Environment Service, Cornwall Archaeological Unit, the Federation of Old Cornwall Societies, and the Milestone Society, has been invaluable. Hopefully, the information provided in monitoring reports by Area Reps and also in this newsletter, is of use to the professional archaeologists and heritage experts. After all, there are not enough professionals to be everywhere in Cornwall, so having someone in every parish is an advantage.

Sometimes Area Reps come across threats to our heritage – damaged bridges, insensitive development, rampant vegetation growth, or neglect, but very often they have been drawn to places out of sheer curiosity. Discoveries have been made too, such as remnants of a stone row in Lezant, numerous boundary stones, and much else.

From Your Own Correspondents readers say....



“It’s a work in progress but take my advice: Troy, Troy and Troy again.”

Heinrich Schliemann

In the fully searchable index, which comes free with this edition, the range of archaeological features described by Area Reps proves to be a veritable ‘What’s What?’ of Cornish archaeology. Bridges have been mentioned more than any other feature, often because they have been hit by motor vehicles - Trekelland Bridge is probably the greatest victim. In some cases, such as at Respryn and Ruthernbridge, effective protection has been installed, but it is no surprise that the Historic England *Heritage at Risk* register for 2020 emphasises the vulnerability of the county’s medieval bridges.

From Your Own Correspondents readers say....

“I try to read it all in just three days.” Tim Team

Stories have spanned a wide chronological range, from henges and tor enclosures through to mines, china clay works and holiday camps, with plenty of reference to Cornwall’s rich medieval legacy of crosses, chapels and churches. It isn’t just a matter of passive reporting either. Active conservation measures, such as scrub clearance and the exciting Monumental Improvement and Penwith Landscape projects have been covered too.

Factors with potential to affect the archaeological heritage, such as proposed planning reforms, and strategy documents from Cornwall Council, have been included.

From Your Own Correspondents readers say....

An intriguing archaeological
mystery in this month's
FYOC, Agatha!

Oh good, but
whodunnit, Max?



Well done to Iain and his trusty team of Area Reps for producing so many stories and for their fortitude in the face of difficult terrain, awful weather and even a pandemic. Let's hope that this dedicated, enthusiastic band will continue to keep us informed of their discoveries and observations for many more editions of *From Your Own Correspondents*!

From Your Own Correspondents readers say....

"Does anyone check this stuff?"

Piers Review.

10 ¼ MILES TO LOOE

Brian Oldham has used his permitted daily exercise to investigate a small but significant feature of the Liskeard and Caradon Railway. When he spotted a small stone at SX2515466917 in St Cleer parish, his curiosity was aroused.



A mysterious stone

Photo sent to Brian Oldham

Brian knows the area well and suspected a connection with the Liskeard and Caradon Railway. But first, a closer inspection was called for.



The stone sits on an embankment.

Photo: Brian Oldham

His first thought was that this was something to do with the Liskeard and Caradon Railway. The position of the stone, on what was probably an embankment, suggested a milestone. But was there an inscription?



Photo: Brian Oldham

There appeared to be an inscription. To work out what it was, chalk was used, revealing the numbers '10 ¼'.



With some research Brian was able to provide the following description:

A granite milestone situated on the North side of the disused Liskeard & Caradon Railway, this section was opened in 1846 with a stone at every 0.25 miles. This stone measures 0.28m across, 0.15m depth, 0.75m height at the rear and 0.60m at the front. It is inscribed 10 ¼ indicating its distance in miles from Buller Quay in Looe. There are very few of these stones in

situ making this recent discovery an important part of local and railway heritage.

He has sent a report to Kresen Kernow so that this stone can be placed on Cornwall's vital Historic Environment Record.

Here's a quick primer on the Liskeard and Caradon Railway from *Cornwall's Railway Heritage* by John Stenglehofen (Twelveheads Press, Truro, 2003):

Built to enable the copper mines and granite quarries of the Caradon Hill area to get the produce to Moorswater and the Liskeard & Looe canal, the railway opened fully in 1846. Its sinuous course was designed to maintain the grade so that trains could run down the line by gravity. Steam locomotives were introduced in 1862. Closure of the mines in 1885 was a major blow but it struggled on until taken over by the GWR in 1909. They closed it in 1917.

The lower part of the route has been overgrown for many years and parts absorbed into fields but the upper section is ideal for walking and exploration, with many fine stretches of granite sleeper blocks...

More information, including a sketch map and photograph, are available in the book.

TEETERING ON THE EDGE

Coastal erosion is ever present and not uncommon at this time of year; however, the climate crisis appears to be accelerating the rate of loss and this has great implications for our archaeological heritage, as this report from Richard Heard shows:

Sir Thomas Acland's famous 'Storm Tower' at Compass Point, and south-west of Bude's beaches, is in peril. Cliff top landslides are inching closer. Originally built circa 1835 and designed by George Wightwick it has already been moved because of erosion around 1900, but failed to be orientated accurately. Now its present peril has brought its surroundings into focus.



Photo 1: Bude Storm Tower

Photo: Richard Heard

See the grassy bump upon its north side in photo No.1, very prominent at that angle. I then photographed the exposed cliff section, as well as I dared, showing 2 layers of stones; photo No.2. Could this be another barrow for the area? Some years back several tumuli were tentatively identified on Summerleaze Down to the north (not sand dunes because of flatter tops).



Photo 2: Cliff fall at Bude

Photo: Richard Heard

It occurs to me that the Compass Point mound could be a dump of topsoil when digging foundations for the tower at the last move. Surely such a valuable commodity would not be thus abandoned! There is no access to the detritus scattered down the sloping cliff face which could yield a relic – even use of abseiling equipment would be dangerous after the winter weather.

Here is the Heritage Gateway entry for the Storm Tower:

The Storm Tower at Bude, also known as The Pepper Pot, is an early coastguard lookout tower, built on the cliffs at Efford, overlooking Bude harbour. It was built in 1835 for Sir Thomas Acland by George Wightwick, who modelled it after the 'Temple of the Winds' in Athens.

Originally the storm tower was built as a refuge for the coastguard. It was also an ornamental feature on the Efford Estate and part of Bude's development plans. It was re-sited c.1900 due to the

eroding cliffs. It was dismantled and rebuilt further inland but unfortunately seven degrees out of alignment

It is shown on the 1st Edition OS 1:2500 map. The structure is octagonal, and points of the compass are inscribed on each wall face (RIS-NT).

See Listed Building description below:

SS 2006-2106 BUDE-STRATTON BUDE 11/162 The Storm Tower - II

Small tower said to have been built as refuge for coastguard but also ornamental. 1835, designed by George Wightwick for Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, 10th Baronet. Roughly-dressed stone brought to course with freestone quoins. Octagonal tower described by Wightwick as "after the Temple of the Winds at Athens". Tower stands on plinth with 3 granite steps up to entrance on east side. Entrance has entablature and pediment on freestone pilasters. Each side has slit window with stone sill, those to north-east and north-west blocked. The points of the compass are carved as a frieze in sans-serif below the moulded cornice. Low pyramidal roof with moulded base to cross formerly surmounting tower. Interior has slate floor and brick dressings to slit windows. Sir Thomas Dyke Acland owned Ebbingford Manor (q.v.) in Bude and regularly stayed at Efford Cottage on the Breakwater. Sir Thomas Acland played a large part in the C19 development of Bude and the Bude Canal was partly built on Acland land. George Wightwick of Plymouth was John Foulston's partner and succeeded to Foulston's architectural practice. He designed a number of buildings in Bude for Sir Thomas Acland including the chapel of St Michael and All Angels (q.v.), East and West Cottages and a Preventative Service House on the Breakwater. Alan Pearson "George Wightwick", Old Cornwall, vol.IX, No. 7, Autumn 1982, pp.338-351; vol.IX no. 8, Spring 1983, pp.402-414. A photograph of the Storm Tower with its cross intact appears in Rennie Bere and Brian Dudley Stamp, The Book of Stratton and Bude (1980) p.107.

Listing NGR: SS2004706342

Source:

https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=MCO46297&resourceID=1020

Report and photographs: Richard Heard

CAM BRIDGES MYSTERY

Have you ever been irked by a mystery? Perhaps something like: 'What is the meaning of life?' or, more importantly, 'What kind of a noise annoys an oyster?' For me, a long unanswered question has been about the meaning of the place-name Cam Bridges in Luxulyan parish. Some of you will know the two sets of bridges along the Saints' Way, south of Luxulyan village (grid reference: SX 05293 57455). It must not be confused with Cambridge, of course: no pampered youths are to be seen in punts on any stretch of the Luxulyan or Par River.

The question remained unanswered for a long time. Then I spotted in the burial records for Luxulyan parish church the following entry for 10 year old Mary Harper, who lived at Cross, near Luxulyan:

‘Drowned in crossing the clam bridge near Ponsmill [Ponts Mill] Dec 19, 1825’

The similarity between ‘clam’ and ‘cam’ was intriguing. Might these words mean the same? Further delay could not be allowed; it was time to find out more. Charles Henderson, in ‘Old Cornish Bridges and Streams’ (1928, 27) was pleased, ‘to hear such honest sounds as *Clam* and *Clapper*. Both are Anglo-Saxon words that have slipped out of general use but they are well enough known to the country folk of Devon and Cornwall. Clam means a twig or a stick, and so it has come to denote the most primitive form of bridge, a tree trunk laid across a stream. Many of our stone bridges had wooden predecessors before the 15th century...Clam Bridges are common in South-east Cornwall, where stone is not as cheap as wood, but on the moors we find their counterparts, the *Clapper* Bridges...’ Henderson also mentions Gam Bridge on the Camel (p. 108).

Luxulyan isn’t short of stone, moorstone or quarried, so would seem to be more a ‘clapper area’ and we have a ‘clam bridge’ at the south of the Valley and ‘Cam Bridges’ at the north. Outside Cornwall other areas have clam bridges, including Dartmoor where at least 10 place-names incorporate the ‘clam’ element. (At Lustleigh Cleave, quite recent efforts to replace the old ‘tree-trunk bridge’ over the River Bovey generated strong opinions because of the expense and concerns regarding Health and Safety.)

Evidence for a clam bridge at Ponts Mill gives us a little insight into the appearance of the location before Treffry’s work began. John Smith, the leading expert on the archaeology of the Valley, explained to me that ‘a bridging point almost certainly arose from its location as the tidal limit of the Par Estuary. In the Iron Age or Romano-British period, such places would have been the lowest practical fording point on the river, with a hard bed for the horses’ hoofs. It would then have been natural to successively formalise the crossing with stepping stones, then a clapper (or clam) bridge and finally a pukka arched masonry bridge in the medieval period’ (2015, pers. comm.). Henderson noted that Ponts Mill (‘Pontes Mulle’ in a document of 1366) may have been the ‘Baldwin’s Bridge’ named in 1200, although this is now disputed - Lostwithiel being the favoured site. He referred to labourers discovering two submerged bridges here in 1835, ‘20 feet below the marsh’. Intriguingly, he went to say: ‘One was of the Clapper type, the other had a low arch. Steep tracks approached them on either side (Henderson 128, 82)’. It is impossible to say if the clam bridge where poor Mary Harper met her untimely death was the one unearthed 14 years later or a different one.

Now to Cam Bridges itself. Here there are 2 bridges, one over the Luxulyan or Par River (SX052935747), the other spanning the Carmears leat (SX0529157437). Presumably, the latter would only date from 1839-1842 when the aqueduct was built but the former would

be older and may have carried the track linking Ponto Mill with the village before Treffry's tramway was built. The tithe map of 1840 shows a track passing over the river at this point, before it entered the village near St Cyor's Farm. I do not know when the name 'Cam Bridges' was first recorded; however, a conveyance dated 18th July 1846 (TF/2928/1-5 in Cornwall Record Office) between J. T. Treffry and Nicholas Kendall concerns a piece of land within Tregoning tenement 'at Cam Bridges'. Possibly a bridge here had long carried a track leading from the village south towards Ponto Mill. (I once found a piece of 13th or 14th century cooking pot to the south of Cam Bridges, but this is hardly enough to give a date to the track, let alone the bridge!) Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to suggest that the stone bridge closer to the village, comprising granite blocks in a clapper style, is situated where an old route leading to the village crossed the river.

One more clapper-style river bridge can be seen in the Valley (I am grateful to Hazel Harradence for reminding me of clapper bridges across leats). At SX 06182 56812, the Luxulyan Valley archaeological survey recorded a 'spur to the Orchard granite quarry which crossed the river on a simple granite slab bridge (T46) and then ran up a short but steep inclined plane (T47) to the quarry workings further up the hillside' (Smith 1988, 69).

So Cam Bridges gets its name from a *clam* or *clapper* bridge. Another existed at Ponto Mill and a similar one near Orchard Quarry. Perhaps this isn't the greatest piece of detective work (doubtless many people knew anyway), nor does it provide a complete explanation, but for those who are interested in this sort of thing, it's a start.



Bridge over the Par River at Cam Bridges ,



Bridge over the feeder leat (originally to supply water to the Charlestown and Carmears Leats) at Cam Bridges



Clapper bridge near Orchard Quarry, Luxulyan Valley



Just visible at top left is another clapper-style bridge leading to Rock Mill Quarry, Luxulyan Valley

Further reading:

Henderson, C, 1928. *Old Cornish Bridges and Streams*, Truro (Reprinted 1972, D. Bradford Barton Ltd)

Smith, J R, 1988. *An Archaeological and Historical Survey, The Luxulyan Valley Project*, Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Truro, 1988

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 .

