

# Finding out about historic landscapes

## The antiquarians

The earliest studies of the monuments of this area were by local antiquaries such as William Borlase, the rector of Ludgvan near Penzance from 1722 until his death in 1772, who published drawings and descriptions of Chun Quoit (10), Chun Castle (11) and Tregeseal stone circles (27). Another local clergyman, the Rev John Buller of St Just, published a survey of the archaeological features he found on Botallack, Truthwall and Carnyorth Commons (20), in his *Statistical account of the parish of Saint Just in Penwith* (1842).

17



## Historic documents

Much information on the history of the downs and moors is available from the tithe (church tax) surveys carried out in every parish about 1840 and from early large-scale Ordnance Survey maps (the 1st and 2nd edition 1:2500 (25in to 1 mile) maps published about 1880 and 1907). These show some individual monuments and record many historic place-

names but also provide clues about other features such as medieval field patterns and the tracks linking particular heathland areas with nearby settlements. Documents such as farm leases and surveys carried out by landowners also provide much useful data, as do descriptions and comments by early travellers.

## Place-names

Place-names often provide useful information. The name Chun, for example, links the Cornish words *chy*, a house or cottage, and *goon*, downs or upland grassland, meaning the house on or near the

downs. Many names associated with areas of heathland, however, are in fact those of the nearby settlements with which they were linked: Trewellard, Carnyorth, Botallack and Truthwall Commons, for example, provided grazing and fuel for the settlements of those names which lie about 1 km to the west (the modern road between St Just and Pendeen passes through them).

## Archaeological survey

Detailed archaeological surveys have been carried out on several parts of the area covered by this trail. These surveys record visible historic features from all periods up to the mid twentieth century and provide essential information for understanding the long-term development of the landscape. Further detail has been added from air photographs.

Scientific study of pollen and other microscopic remains preserved in peat and ancient soils provides information on the extent of woodland or heathland vegetation at various periods, for example, or of the crops which were grown.

## Excavation

There have been no modern archaeological excavations in the area covered by the trail. In the nineteenth century W C Borlase dug around Chun Quoit (10) and excavations at Chun Castle (11) were carried out in the 1920s by E T Leeds, revealing evidence for use of the site in the Later Iron Age and continuing into the post-Roman period. Many barrows were opened by tanners and stone-workers seeking treasure.



## Finding out more

Information on Cornwall's archaeology is available from Cornwall County Council Historic Environment Service (HES): Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Truro TR12 3AY. Tel: 01872 323603. Email: hes@cornwall.gov.uk The HES web portal – [www.historic-cornwall.org.uk](http://www.historic-cornwall.org.uk) – gives links to full air photo plotting for Cornwall and details of selected monuments.

## Further reading

Useful books include: John Barnatt, *Prehistoric Cornwall: the ceremonial monuments* (Turnstone Press, Wellingborough, 1982); Nicholas Johnson and Peter Rose, *Cornwall's archaeological heritage* (Twelveheads Press, Chacewater, 2003); Craig Weatherhill, *Belerion: ancient sites of Land's End* (Alison Hodge, Penzance, 1981).

Two booklets have been produced for the HEATH Project by the Historic Environment Service: Peter Dudley, *The archaeology of the moors, downs and heaths of west Cornwall*; Graeme Kirkham, *Managing archaeology and historic landscapes on west Cornwall's rough ground*. These are available from the address above or can be downloaded as PDFs from [www.theheathproject.org.uk/heritage.html](http://www.theheathproject.org.uk/heritage.html)

16