

Trethevey, Tintagel, Cornwall

Conservation and re-display of the Roman inscribed stone



Historic Environment Projects

Trethevey, Tintagel, Cornwall

Conservation and re-display of the Roman inscribed stone

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Charles Thomas kindly supplied information and a photograph of the inscription taken by his daughter Susannah.

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Cover illustration Gaius Vibius Trebonianus Gallus (206 - August, 253), Roman Emperor from 251 to 253, in a joint rule with his son Volusianus. Bronze of Gallus dating from the time of his reign as Roman Emperor, the only surviving near-complete full-size 3rd century Roman bronze (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

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Abbreviations

CC	Cornwall Council
CCC	Cornwall County Council, now Cornwall Council
EH	English Heritage
HBSMR	Historic Buildings, Sites & Monuments Record: Cornwall's archaeological database, at HE
HE CC	Historic Environment, Cornwall Council
HES	Historic Environment Service, now Historic Environment
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRN	Primary Record Number in Cornwall HBSMR
SM	Scheduled Monument
FMW	Field Monument Warden
HEFA	Historic Environment Field Advisor

Trebevy, Tintagel, Cornwall, Roman inscribed stone

1 Summary

This report describes a project undertaken in 2008-9, involving an inscribed Roman pillar stone at Trethevey in Tintagel. The stone was first noticed in 1919, in use as gatepost, after which it was moved to the garden of a house known as St Piran's. This report describes work undertaken by Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, in 2008-9 to conserve, present and improve the interpretation of this the stone. Finally the fact that the stone is commonly referred to as a milestone is challenged. Formerly located at SX 0762 8919, but now at SX 07616 89153, the stone is a Scheduled Monument, number 30431, and is number 23107 in Cornwall Council's Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments Record.

2 Introduction

In the hamlet of Trethevey, Tintagel, is a granite pillar with an inscription in abbreviated Latin on it, recognised soon after it was discovered as being of Roman origin. Although there are no known Roman roads in the vicinity and no distances recorded on the stone, it is generally described as a ‘milestone’.

The stone was first noticed in 1919, in use as gatepost, after which it was moved to the garden of a house known as St Piran’s. This report describes work undertaken by Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, in 2008-9 to conserve, present and improve the interpretation of this Roman inscribed stone. The stone, formerly located at SX 0762 8919, but now at SX 07616 89153 is a Scheduled Monument, number 30431, is number 23107 in Cornwall Council’s Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments Record.

2.1 The monument

2.1.1 Description of the monument

The monument is a square-section granite pillar, approximately 1.5 metres high. On one face is an inscription in capital letters, in abbreviated Latin. This is generally read as:

...C
DOMI
NGAL
LO ET
VOLUS

and interpreted as *Imperatoribus Caesaribus Dominis Nostris Gallo et Volusiano*, ‘to the Emperors Caesars our lords Gallus and Volusianus’. From the emperors named, the inscription can be dated remarkably closely, to AD 251 – 253 (Haverfield 1924, 28; Collingwood and Wright 1965, no 2230).

2.1.2 Roman milestones and honorific pillars

The Roman stone at Trethevey is a typical example of a group of monuments which, though known by the generic name of ‘milestones’, often include inscribed pillars which have no mileage on them and/or no obvious association with a road.

A typical Roman milestone might be a square, cylindrical or occasionally octagonal pillar, over a metre high, bearing an inscription which gave, first, the name and titles of the reigning Emperor, his consulate and tribunician power, and the mileage from a stated town. They might be set up when a road was first constructed or when it was repaired. Many later stones (ie of the 3rd and 4th centuries), like that at Trethevey, only record the name of the reigning emperor without giving any place-names or distances, and it has been suggested that these therefore served as propaganda – though as upright pillars they may have acted as road-markers also. Though often referred to as milestones these are sometimes alternatively known as honorific pillars. Most milestones and honorific pillars are associated with Roman roads, military sites and towns but a small number, like Trethevey, have no obvious Roman association.

In addition to the stone at Trethevey, there are four others known in Cornwall, all honorific pillars which do not record any road details, although the find-spot of one is considered to relate to a former road line. The others are at Tintagel Church, Breage Church (found less than 100 metres from the church) St Hilary Church and at Mynheer in Gwennap parish.

2.1.3 Assessment of the significance of the monument

Being one of only five such stones in Cornwall, this stone has considerable importance. Since one of the other four stones was also found in Tintagel parish, the stone has added significance for its group value, a factor enhanced by the increasing recognition of Roman-period activity on Tintagel headland and in Cornwall generally.

2.2 Condition of the monument

Use as a gatepost during the 19th century has caused considerable damage to the monument. Two dowel holes for the insertion of gate hangings have been sunk into the inscribed face and the top of the stone has cracked off above the level of the upper hanging. Corrosion of the iron hangings had caused staining on the inscribed face, while conservators Sue and Lawrence Kelland (appendix 1) noted that small surface flakes of granite had detached around the gate hangings, probably as a result of corrosion of the iron. In the long term, iron corrosion could cause the stone to split completely.

The stone is heavily encrusted in lichen, which obscures the inscription but does in fact help to protect the stone.

2.3 Background to the present project

In 2006, the property where the stone is located was bought by new owners. They immediately made contact with English Heritage regarding the stone and its protection. They reported that many visitors called to see the stone, who were often disappointed when they found that it looked more like a broken gatepost than a 2000-year old monument. As the inscription is not very clear the lack of on-site interpretation was also a problem, although the owner did have some photocopied information available (see appendix 1).

In co-operation with Stephanie Brewis, the new owner, a project was devised initially to remove the gate hangings from the stone, set it up on a base, and provide an interpretive leaflet. However as time went on and the need for access for the many visitors became increasingly apparent it was agreed, following negotiation with English Heritage, that the stone could be moved from the garden to a more accessible location.

2.4 Aims of the management work

Thus the final project aims were as follows:

- Stabilise the monument by removing potentially damaging iron work
- Restore the original appearance and a sense of dignity to the stone by removing the gate fixings
- Enhance presentation of the stone by setting on a base
- Improve access to the monument by moving it to a verge on the boundary of St Piran's
- Improve interpretation by providing a plaque near the stone
- Fully record the stone at all stages in the management work, summarising the results in a brief report

3 History, location and setting

3.1 Setting

Trethevey is located in the northern corner of the parish of Tintagel, on the coastal plain, in a north-west facing valley head above the steep-sided valley of St Nectan's Glen. Although the name in *tre-* implies a place of early medieval origin (Padel 1985, 223-232), the settlement is not first recorded until 1196 in (*Tredewi*: Gover 1948, 85). Trethevey is also notable as the site of a medieval chapel and holy well dedicated to St Piran. Domesday Book records the existence of a manor belonging to St Piran's Monastery near Trethevey in 1086 (Thorn 1979, 5,8,10), which must explain the dedications of the chapel and holy well, so far from the main places associated with this saint, in west Cornwall.

The surrounding area has all been characterised as 'Anciently Enclosed Land' – part of a narrow strip on the coastal plain between the cliffs to the north and high ground rising towards Condolden Beacon on the south.

3.2 History of the stone

The stone was found in 1919 in use as a gatepost in the hamlet of Trethevey. The precise location of the discovery is not known, but according to local people is thought to have been in the lane to the south of a house called St Pirans. The Victoria County History in 1924 contains the first record of the stone and as this was written close to the time of discovery, it is quoted fully below:

'...squared granite column 4 ft. 6 in. high, 12–14 in. broad and 10 in. thick. It has been used as a gatepost, and two dowel holes for the insertion of hinges have been sunk in the inscribed face; the stone has cracked off at the level of the upper dowel hole, and the top of the stone is lost, but the loss can hardly amount to more than 5 or 6 in.. The remainder of the stone is now carefully preserved by being cemented into paving against the wall of the house near which it was found in 1919 by Mr W.B. Harris. It was seen some time after by Mr. H. Jenner and Sir W. Flinders Petrie, who recognised it as a Roman milestone...

The inscription is shallow and much more weathered, but four lines can be read with certainty, and there are unmistakable traces of two other lines, at the beginning and end respectively. These read: C/DOMI/NGAL/LOET/VOLUS, that is:

[Imp(eratoribus)] C(aesaribus) Domi(nis) N(ostris) Gallo et Volus[iano...]

'To the Emperors Caesars our Lords Gallus and Volusianus...'

The c at the end of line 1 is too faint for certainty, but it looks as if line 1 had run IMP C. This, regarded as a plural, is incorrect: but so, in any case, is DOMIN, whether we understand it as reading Domi(nis) n(ostris) or Domin(is nostris), alternatives equally discreditable to the cutter's style. The text is however, clear; nor would the solecism be removed by dating the stone to 251, when Volusian was not yet raised to the rank of Augustus. Otherwise the date would be 251 - 253.' (Haverfield 1924, 28)

The illustration that accompanied this description is shown in Fig 3.

Later authorities, for example Collingwood and Wright (1965, 694-5), all follow this account and interpretation of the inscription. Most agree that the main four lines of the inscription are clear, but that the top and bottom lines are uncertain, other than the first 'C': which is only faintly indicated in Collingwood's drawing. This is because they have been damaged by the insertion of gate-hangings (Figs 3 and 5). The stone was designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument soon after its discovery, in 1928, as Cornwall number 85.

After discovery, the stone was moved into the garden of St Piran's, where it was set against a wall of the house. In 1980 it was moved again, to a flower-bed in the grounds of St Piran's (Fig 4). The reason for the move was that the owners of the house found it inconvenient having many people calling to see the stone. Because they had opened up a nursery in part of their garden, it seemed appropriate to move the stone there, where it would be easier for visitors and less inconvenient for themselves (information from English Heritage Field Monument Warden's files). Here, until the recent conservation work, it remained.

3.3 Condition prior to conservation and re-display

The English Heritage (EH) Field Monument Warden's (FMW's) accounts of the stone indicate that the new position of the stone in the nursery was not entirely satisfactory either. In 1985 it was noted that it was not firmly fixed in the ground and in 2005 it was almost entirely overgrown with vegetation (Fig 6). When Dyer visited the stone in 2005, it took a long time to find 'because the growth of the plants around it had almost engulfed the ancient relic'. Moreover it was 'fast disappearing into the undergrowth, perhaps never to be retrieved again and certainly being subjected to considerable damage' (Dyer 2005, 489). By 2007 it had also started to lean slightly.

In addition, the iron gate-hangings embedded in the face of the stone were a particular cause for concern (Fig 4). In 1992 the FMW noted that runoff from the top gate-hanging was causing the development of a green moss or algal growth, while rust-stained runoff from the bottom one was discolouring the stone. In addition, the inscription was obscured by lichens.

With the advent of a new and sympathetic owner in 2005 the surroundings were tidied up but the problems of the stone's inadequate foundation and deterioration of the iron fittings remained. A report compiled by Sue and Lawrence Kelland in 2007 confirmed that the condition of the ironwork was a serious issue:

'The hinges consist of one on the same side as the inscription, set in lead, with some stone packers and possibly iron wedges; the other is on the top and is an angled bracket, again set in lead and also bedded along its length with lead....There are some signs that small fragments of surface have been lost around the lower hinge, which may be due to the corrosion of the iron....there is iron staining beneath the upper hinge.'

In the long term, iron corrosion could have caused further damage and even split the stone. The Kellands therefore recommended that to protect the inscription, the ironwork should be removed and the resultant cavities filled with lime mortar.

3.4 Access and interpretation

With Tintagel Castle and village only a short distance away, Trethevey is in a popular area for visitors. In the hamlet of Trethevey are St Piran's chapel and holy well, while in the immediate area are the Rocky valley maze carvings and St Nectan's Kieve. The Roman stone is a further attraction, and all Field Monument Wardens' reports highlight the fact that the stone attracted significant numbers of visitors. Over recent years, the addition of the internet to the sources of information available has reportedly added to the numbers of visitors seeking the stone.

While the nursery was open to visitors, the stone was accessible during opening times. But in 2008, with a change in the way nursery was managed, it was often shut, thereby restricting access to the stone, except with the help of the owner.

Stephanie Brewis noted that when she was showing the stone to visitors, many were disappointed in its appearance. With gate-hangings in the inscribed face, it looked more like a broken gatepost than a 2000 year old monument, distinctly lacking the gravitas due to something of this age and importance.

All of these factors led to the management work described in section 4 below. The associated recording is described in section 5.

4 The conservation work and redisplay

The project to restore and move the stone proceeded in stages which are described below, in the order in which they took place.

4.1 The removal of the iron fittings

The removal of the ironwork was carried out in December 2008 by Sue and Lawrence Kelland (Kelland 2008).

The upper gate-hanger (in the top of the stone) was found to be in reasonable condition. It was well bedded in lead and no water was getting in, so that the iron was not badly corroded and not causing any serious problems.

On the other hand, the lower hanger was certainly causing damage and its removal was very timely. The gate-hanger itself, which was bedded in lead, was in reasonable condition. However, at some point it must have become loose and to remedy this, the setting had been additionally packed with thin bits of iron and old hand-made nails. These were corroding and expanding, putting pressure on the stone and causing small fragments of stone to flake off.

Both hangings were carefully removed by drilling out the lead around them. After this the holes were packed with hydraulic lime (NHL 3.5) and sand mortar coloured to blend with the lichen covering the stone. (Fig 7)

4.2 The lichen

Although masking the inscription to some extent, this was not removed as it was considered to be helping to protect the stone.

4.3 Moving the stone from the garden

Much debate surrounded the proposal to remove the stone from the nursery. Initially the plan had been to improve its security and presentation by simply mounting it on a base within the garden: but as it became apparent that the number of visitors was a considerable nuisance to the owners' privacy it was decided that removal to a publicly accessible location would be desirable. In addition, there was a strong possibility that the current, sympathetic, owners might move on, raising the possibility that their place would be taken by people less sympathetic to the stone and its many visitors.

The main objection to the move was the fact that in so-doing, the stone might lose its protected status. In a public location it would, moreover, be more open to threats such as vehicle damage, theft and vandalism.

Nonetheless, English Heritage was eventually persuaded that, given the choice of the right site and certain actions to safeguard the security of the stone, the advantages of moving it outweighed the benefits of leaving it where it was.

The safeguards that English Heritage insisted on were as follows:

- Choose a location that is as safe as reasonably possible from vehicle damage
- Record the stone and its inscription fully before it is moved
- Ensure that the stone is safely secured in a base
- Microchip the stone so as to help with its identification, should it be stolen

The preferred new choice of site – in the lane to the south of St Piran's - fulfilled the requirements perfectly and other conditions (base, recording, microchipping) were agreed and implemented as part of the project.

In addition the Conservation Officer, Sarah Cawrse, was consulted as the garden wall against which it was to be set is Listed, Grade II*. She was in agreement with the proposal.

4.4 Restoration in the lane

And so in 2009 the stone was moved and set up in what is hoped will be its final resting place, on the verge in the lane south of St Piran's, at SX 07616 89153 (for location, see Fig 2), a spot which is likely to be very close to the location in which it was originally discovered in 1919. This location was selected because it would remain within the same ownership, would be far more easily accessible than at present and would remain accessible even if the property were to change hands at any time in the future. The lane is well-used by locals walking their dogs and by visitors heading down to see the waterfall in St Nectan's Glen; the verge is amply wide (approximately 1.5 metres or 5 ft) and attractively planted with shrubs. Here, it would also be in a position where the inscription would be well displayed by oblique sunlight in the middle of the afternoon.

4.4.1 Removing the stone from the nursery

The stone was removed from its position within the garden/nursery on 13th October 2009, by Adrian Thomas and Pip Morse. Because there was no possibility of getting any machinery into the garden, this was done by hand, using wooden rollers to move the stone from the flowerbed and onto a small trolley, on which it was then conveyed to a waiting trailer (Fig 9) .

4.4.2 Fitting the new base

The stone was removed to St Just where a granite base was being prepared by Adrian Thomas. The new base is a substantial block of weathered granite, measuring approximately 84 cm (33 inches) by 104 cm (41 inches) and on average 0.35 metres (14 inches) thick. Here, the mortice was cut to fit the stone as snugly as possible in the base, while leaving a space for manoeuvre of up to one inch all the way around (Fig 10).

4.4.3 Restoring the stone

The stone was brought back to Trethevey and set up in its base on 26th October 2009 (Fig 11).

It was set up by Adrian Thomas with assistance from Geoff Hoad, who drove the digger. The event was witnessed by many visitors walking along the lane to see the waterfall in St Nectan's Glen – this being the first Monday of the autumn half term. Shrubs had first been cleared from the verge. The base-stone was then set on the verge, a couple of inches in front of the crenellated, grade 2 listed, garden wall. It was placed so that the stone would be set symmetrically below one of the wall's turrets and buried 15cm (6 ins) in the ground, so that it appears earth-fast.

Several coins were thrown into the mortice to record the date of restoration for posterity: two had the year 2009 on them.

The Roman stone was then carefully lowered into place, checked to make sure that it was vertical, wedged in place and then the gaps filled with slates and lime mortar. It was let into the base to about the level in which it had previously stood in the flower bed in the garden, so that about 36 cm (14 ins) is hidden in the base.

As restored, the stone now stands 1.26 m (4 ft 1 ½ in) high above the base, is 36 cm (14 in) in front of the wall and 16.5 cm (6 ½ ins) below the level of the embrasures of the crenellated garden wall.

The base gives the stone security as well as greater substance and dignity and altogether it now forms an impressive and attractive feature beside the road. There seems little likelihood that the stone will ever be threatened by traffic. All vehicles along the lane are local, there are no big lorries, there are more people than cars, and as well as being set on a substantial base which is 60cm (2 ft) from the edge of the road, the stone itself is 80 cm back. (Fig 13).

4.5 Provision of a plaque

Given the condition of the inscription, which is only clearly visible in ideal light conditions, it was considered essential that some form of interpretation should be provided for the stone in its new location. Having considered the options, it was decided that an inscribed slate plaque would be most appropriate as this would look natural, attractive and in keeping with the Grade II* listed garden walls.

Permission to fix the plaque to the wall behind the stone was obtained from Sarah Cawrse the conservation officer.

The plaque is of slate from Delabole, A3 size (420 x 297 mm), with letters incised and picked out in gold paint. The wording is minimal, to keep the inscription clear and uncluttered. It reads:

**ROMAN
INSCRIBED PILLAR

FOUND NEARBY IN 1919
IN USE AS A GATEPOST

DATED AD 251 – 253**

...C
DOMI
NGAL
LO ET
VOLUS

.....

‘..to the Emperors Caesars our lords Gallus and Volusianus..’

The one difficult part of this was deciding how to transcribe the inscription, given that it is so very faint and difficult to make out. In the end, the letters transcribed were based on those most frequently reported by the various sources and that which could be seen when the stone was photographed in oblique light (for which see below).

The plaque was screwed to the wall, and the gap between the wall and the plaque filled with lime mortar (Fig 12).

4.6 Microchipping

A microchip was fixed to the stone on completion of the project. Its number is held securely at HE CC.

5 The archaeological input to the project

Archaeological input was limited to project organisation, recording and monitoring the work as it proceeded, ensuring that all ran smoothly, and that there was no damage to the stone at any stage. In addition, the stone and its inscription were fully recorded.

5.1 Monitoring the work

All stages of the work were recorded by description, notes and photography: these form the basis of this report.

5.2 Recording the stone and the inscription

The stone is a roughly square pillar of granite. Its smoothest face is that with the inscription on it: so it is possible that this has been dressed (or deliberately selected) for the inscription. Overall, the stone measures 1.6 and 0.3 by 0.3 metres across. It tapers towards the bottom and looks as though (before the top was lost) it tapered slightly towards the top as well.

The stone has been mutilated by use as a gatepost. Two holes to take gate hangers have been inserted into the face with the inscription (probably because this was the flattest face) and the top one has caused the top of the stone to break off. Hence a further gate hanger was also inserted into the top of the stone. A small unfinished hole near the bottom of the stone is of uncertain origin.

The inscription was photographed using a Nikon Digital Single Lens Reflex camera, with oblique lighting to help highlight the inscription (Fig 13). This confirms that the inscription is very much as recorded previously, with four lines with letters reasonably clearly defined, traces of a possible fifth line, and uncertain traces of a 'C' on the line above.

The inscription is laid out in horizontal lines, the letters are lightly but clearly incised. Generally, the vowels are smaller than the consonants. There is little doubt about the letters in the four main lines. In the line above these, most sources have identified a faint 'C' (for Caesar); and the owner of the stone, who has had the benefit of seeing it every day of the year, at all times of the day, and in all lights, believes that the letters 'IMP' letters are also visible (see appendix 1). None of this is clearly visible on the photographs taken in 2009 (Fig 14); however this area has been both damaged by the gate hanging and is heavily affected by lichen growth, making interpretation difficult. There are traces of further possible lettering below the main four lines of the inscription. Here, AUG for 'Augustus' might be expected since other inscriptions to the same emperors incorporate these letters (Collingwood and Wright 1965, 2223, 2274, 2279) but it is not possible to reconcile the marks on the stone with these letters. And again, this area has been seriously mutilated, so it is equally possible that the lines do not belong to the inscription but are associated with this damage.

5.3 Interpretation of the stone

Stephanie Brewis has been adamant in pointing out the Trethevey stones is not a milestone but an honorific pillar: its inscription merely commemorates the Emperors Gallus and Volusianus and has no mileage or reference to road repairs on it. Nor is there any sign of a Roman road in the vicinity, although attempts have been made to trace one (Collingwood

1924, 106, Fig 5; Thomas 1993, 83). Why, then, is this sign of Roman imperial authority here at all?

The stone at Trethevey is considered in appendix 1 in relation to the other similar stones in Cornwall. There, the overall conclusion is that the stone at Trethevey, with that at Tintagel Church, is linked to a late Roman military presence in the Tintagel area, as also seen in the distribution of coin hoards of the period and evidence for late Roman activity on Tintagel Island (Barrowman, Batey and Morris 2007, 309-313; Moorhead 2010). Like four of the other Roman pillars in Cornwall, the Trethevey Stone is at a site with medieval settlement and Christian activity and which, moreover, has a holy well at its heart. At Tintagel Church, the gap between the erection of the stone and the earliest Christian activity was only just over a century (Collingwood and Wright 1965, no 2231; Nowakowski and Thomas 1992, 4-11), suggesting that either the early Christian burial ground was established around a Roman period stone or, perhaps more likely, that there was continuity of a religious focus. It would be even more speculative to suggest that Trethevey's stone might also have had an original association with a Roman-period settlement and/or religious site, a precursor to the early medieval one, but tucked into a small hollow in the coastal plain with a holy well at its core, at a settlement whose place-name in *tre-* indicates an early medieval origin and which later had a chapel with a dedication to a Celtic saint, this seems a more tempting idea than searching for a lost road!

To suggest that the stone represents, in effect, a small shrine within a settlement may be too extreme a reaction against the idea that it is just a road-marker or milestone, but it does appear that as a group, the Roman inscribed stones in Cornwall are unusual and in need of re-evaluation in order to truly understand their function in the landscape.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this has been a very satisfactory project. The stone has been conserved, secured on a base, its inscription has been recorded and the photos can be used for future condition monitoring, it is accessible at all times and now also has much greater dignity than before. All this is a tribute to the determination of the owner, Stephanie Brewis, who recognised the importance of the stone and the need to look after it appropriately. While proud to be its guardian she also acknowledged the interest that it has for many others, and so agreed to moving it to a better position. Here, we hope, it will be safe for many more years to come.

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8 Project archive

The HE project number is **2008219**

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is housed at the offices of Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are as listed below:

1. A project file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration.
2. An information file containing copies of documentary/cartographic source material.
3. Digital photographs stored in the directory R:\Historic Environment (Images)\SITES.Q-T\Trethevy, Tintagel\Milestone

This report text is held in digital form as: G:\Historic Environment (Documents)\HE Projects\Sites\Sites T\Trethevy, Tintagel, milestone repair 2008.doc

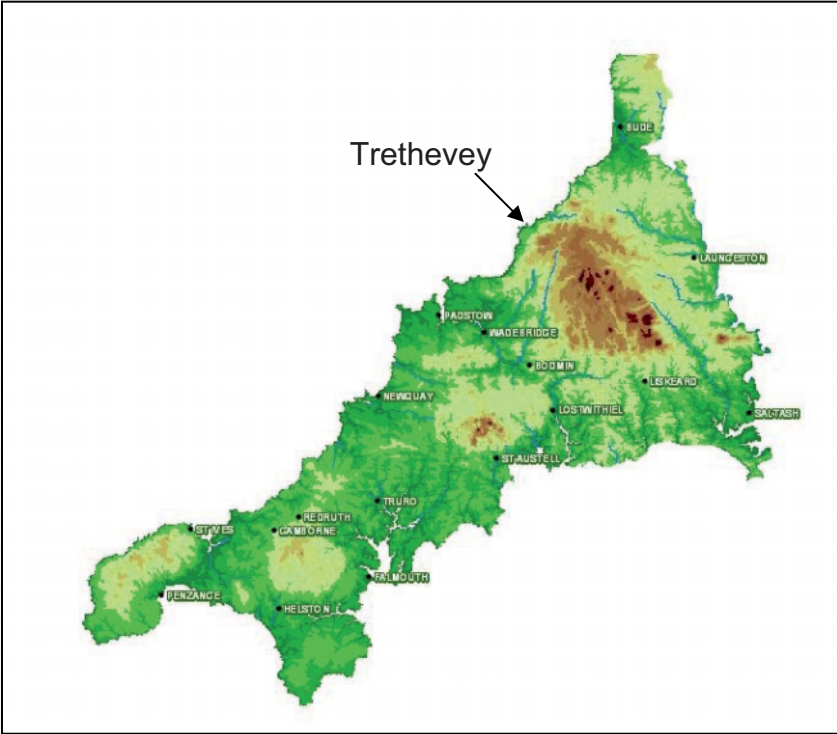


Fig 1 Location of Trethevey

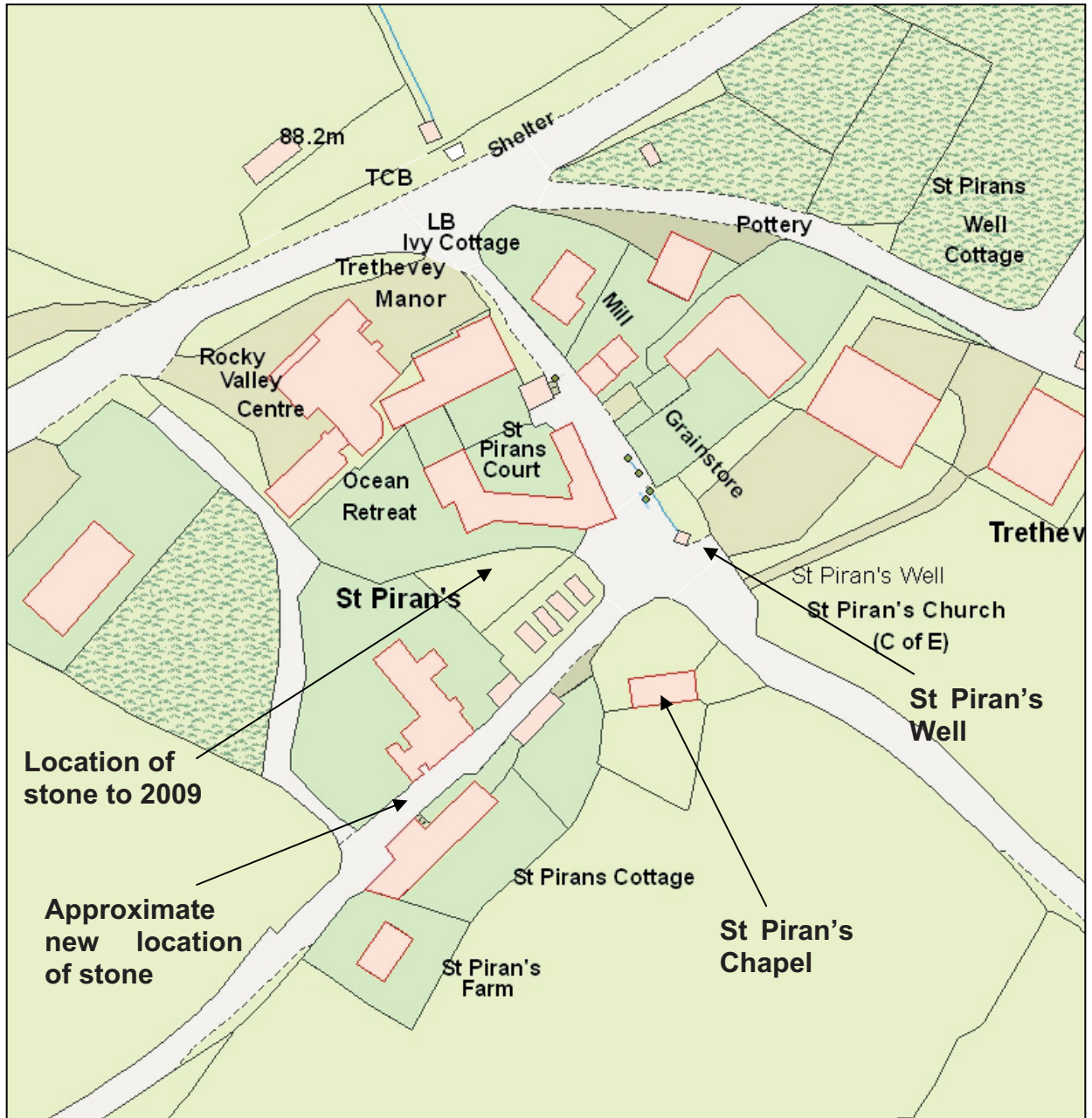


Fig 2 Location of the Roman stone and other historic features at Trethevey

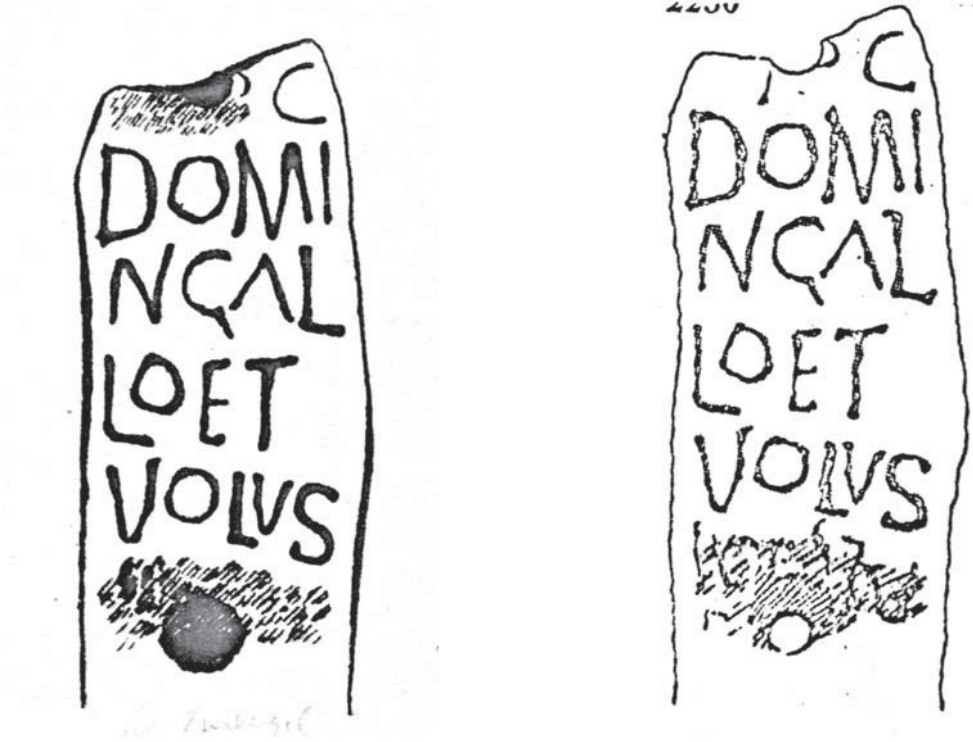


Fig 3 The inscription, transcribed by Haverfield (above left) Collingwood and Wright (above right) and picked out in charcoal on the stone by Charles Thomas (photo by Susannah Thomas)



Fig 4 The stone in the garden at Trethevey, before conservation work

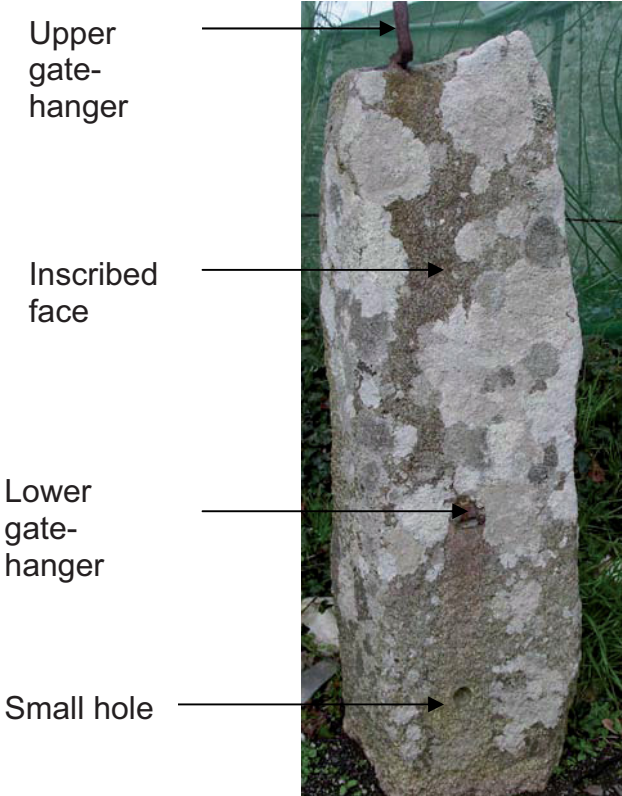


Fig 5 The condition of the stone: two views of both the upper and the lower gate-hangings



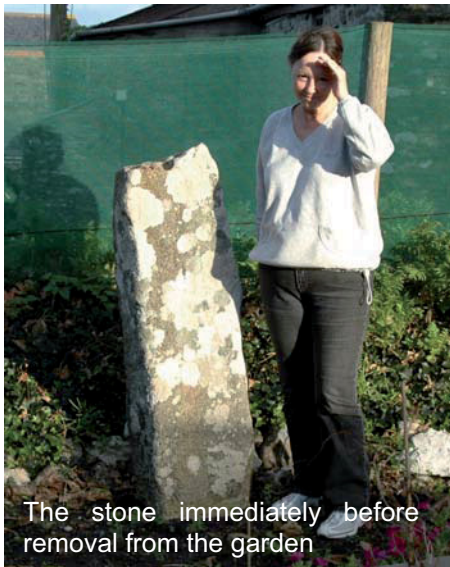
Fig 6 The stone engulfed by vegetation in 2003



Fig 7 Lawrence Kelland extracting the iron gate-hangings



Fig 8 The ironwork once removed



The stone immediately before removal from the garden



Moving the stone from the flower bed



Moving the stone from the flower bed onto the trolley



Moving the stone out of the garden on the trolley

Fig 9 Removing the stone from the garden, to take it to the workshop



Fig 10 The new base: selecting, installing and putting dating evidence in the mortice



Fig 11 Restoring the stone on the verge at Trethevey

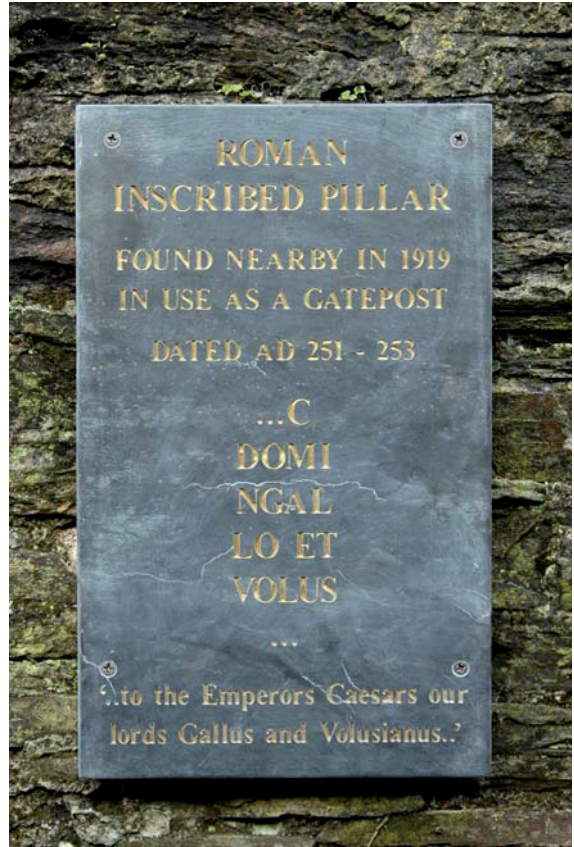


Fig 12 The new plaque

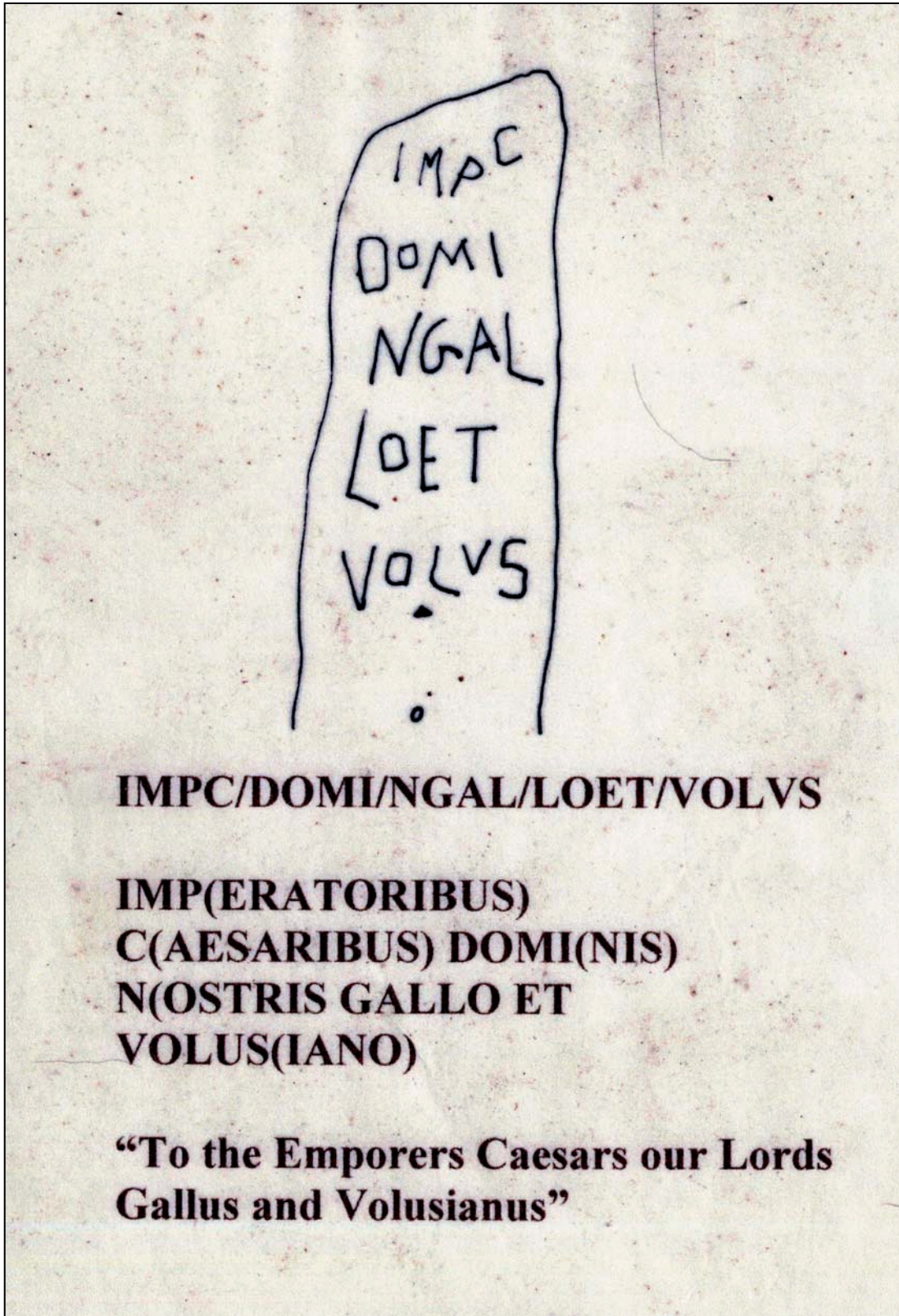


Fig 13 The restored Roman honorific pillar



Fig 14 Photo-recording of the stone, with a transcription

**Appendix 1 Information provided for visitors by
Stephanie Brewis when the stone was still in the garden
of St Piran's**



Appendix 2 Roman ‘milestones’ in Cornwall

In undertaking the project, both Stephanie Brewis, the owner of the stone, and Ann Preston-Jones, the author of this report undertook some research on the topic of Roman inscribed pillar-stones, of which there are altogether five in Cornwall: two in the Tintagel area, two in the Mounts Bay area, and one in mid-west Cornwall. Stephanie was particularly concerned about the common description of the stones as ‘milestones’; Ann was interested in the context of the stones. Some of our thoughts and findings are described here. It should be borne in mind, however, that as neither of us is a specialist in the Roman period, our views are probably naïve.

As the main report notes, a number of authors refer to the stone at Trethevey, and other similar stones in the county, as a ‘milestone’ (for example Hencken 1932, 195-6; Fox 1973, 170 and Todd 1987, 218) and this has encouraged people to look for roads or tracks associated with the stones, that might have been used in Roman times – there being no ‘true’ Roman roads in Cornwall (see for example Collingwood in Haverfield 1924, 30-32 and Thomas 1993, 82-3). The only Roman roads to have been found in Cornwall to date have been identified through geophysical survey at the forts at Calstock and Restormel. Neither these, nor the known Roman fort at Nanstallon, are associated with a ‘milestone’.

The struggle to find a reason for a Roman road in the Tintagel area, which so perplexed earlier writers (‘why a Roman road should come to Tintagel at all I cannot see’: Collingwood 1924, 105-6; Collingwood in Haverfield 1924, 31), is no longer a problem. Discoveries of coins reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme are now pointing to a late Roman military presence in the area linked to the collection of taxes (Moorhead 2010) while recent work on Tintagel Island has revealed clear evidence of late Roman activity (Thomas 1993, 84-5; Barrowman, Batey and Morris 2007, 309-313). Finds included a fragmentary inscription of possible 5th century date (op cit 191-200). These indicators of Roman activity contemporary with the stones do provide a context for a road at Tintagel, if not the road itself. Thomas suggests that a road in this area may have run down the north coast to the Camel Estuary, where Roman finds have been found in St Enodoc (Haverfield 1924, 6; Todd 1987, 219; Thomas 1993, 83). Despite this, the location of the Trethevey stone and find-spots of other Roman inscribed stones in Cornwall continues to puzzle and suggests that the simple ‘milestone’ explanation will not quite do, not least because none of the stones record miles or places!

Stephanie Brewis has been adamant in pointing out that the range of Roman inscribed pillar stones in the country as a whole is varied, and that the term ‘milestone’ has been used rather loosely to denote stones which in fact have a range of functions. The term ‘honorific pillars’ has alternatively been used for stones with no mileage and no obvious road, and that is the term preferred for the Trethevey stone - although it is a rather clumsy name. An interesting (if slightly confusing) discussion of the problem by Spaul relates to a stone found close to the Roman villa at Clanville in Hampshire (Spaul 2005). Here the problem is again that a stone which has been described as a ‘milestone’ does not have miles, places or a road to go with it!

Spaul maps and assesses the entire corpus of ‘milestones’ found in Britain, which include 96 inscriptions on 88 stones. His list is based on stones listed by Collingwood and Wright under the heading of milestones and honorific pillars (ie stones with an emperors name only, and no mileage or record of road maintenance) (Collingwood and Wright 1965). Spaul’s map is interesting. It shows that most such stones, whether they record a mileage or not, are close to roads, and in particular are associated with towns, forts and military zones. However, he notes

that in some instances a ‘milestone’ does not appear to be associated with a road. Analysis of the alleged ‘milestones’ shows that in fact only thirteen are true milestones, in that they record a distance. There are in addition a range of stones which are associated with roads, which he prefers to call road-markers, because although they have an inscription honouring an emperor, they do not record a distance. Reasonably tall, they would have stood out from a distance and could have acted as a guide for travellers (these he confusingly calls Honorific Pillars as well as road-markers, and ‘Name Posts’ on the map).

But, as Spaul notes, this leaves a number of stones which do not obviously appear to be related to a road. One suggestion for such stones is that they could have served as propaganda: see for example

http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe_prb/m/milestone.a_spx but in discussing two such in Hampshire, Spaul comes to the conclusion that they may have originated as boundary markers for Imperial estates in the county. The other anomalies that he identifies include four of the five Roman inscribed stones found in Cornwall.

The other Roman inscribed stones in Cornwall are at Breage and St Hilary in west Cornwall near the south coast; at Mynheer in Gwennap, in mid-west Cornwall, as well as the two from Tintagel. All are of 3rd or 4th century date and all are ‘honorific pillars’, rather than true milestones. They are linked by Fox to late Roman exploitation and control of tin mining in Cornwall (Fox 1973, 183-4). A case has been made that the two stones at St Hilary and Breage may relate to a road running along the south coast and converging on Mounts Bay (Collingwood in Haverfield 1924, 30-32) and St Michael’s Mount – potentially the legendary Ictis - and where recent finds are pointing to the possibility that late Roman period activity preceded development as a post-Roman citadel (Herring 1993, 36-7, 59-62; 2000, 116-122). Nonetheless, it is still of interest to look at their contexts, because by turning away from the simple idea of roads, and looking at their wider historical and landscape setting, the fact of their association with contemporary settlement or ritual foci becomes apparent.

Only one of the Cornish stones, that found at Mynheer in Gwennap, probably does have an association with a road, since a possible road line was identified at the time of its discovery (Wright 1944; Collingwood and Wright 1965, 2234; Fox 1973, 170). (Although this has never been re-assessed since its original discovery.)

In contrast, however, all the others are at church or chapel sites, while two are also at sites which may have an Iron Age or Romano-British origin. That at Breage was found less than a hundred metres from Breage Church and then taken to the church for safe keeping (Haverfield 1924, 27). Breage is a mother church with a large parish; and while there is no evidence for an early medieval origin this seems probable, given its status. The church is located in a prominent position and has a curvilinear churchyard which may well have originated as an Iron Age or Romano-British enclosure or round (Preston-Jones 1994, fig 6, 83). The stone at St Hilary has an even closer association with the church site, being found built into the church foundations (Haverfield 1924, 27). A suggestion of Haverfield’s that the St Hilary stone came originally from the Roman period enclosure at Bosence a mile and a half away is rightly dismissed by Collingwood (in Haverfield 1924, 30-32), but it is notable that St Hilary’s churchyard is of very similar form to the earthwork at Bosence, raising (with the inscription) the possibility that St Hilary church may have been built on a pre-existing, Roman-period, earthwork (Preston-Jones 1994, fig 6, 83). Herring (*pers comm*) suggests that both St Hilary and Lelant Churches, five miles apart but intervisible, may be on the site of small Roman forts. Also at St Hilary is an early medieval inscribed stone, dateable to the 7th century (Okasha 1993, 236-8; Thomas 1994, 289-90). Stray finds and hoards indicate a Roman presence in this area of south-west Cornwall: these include three coins found in a tin streamwork in Marazion Marsh (Penhallurick 2009, 9, 146-52).

The stone at Tintagel Church was found in use as a coffin rest at the church gate (Haverfield 1924, 8). Where it came from before this is not known, but as Thomas has pointed out, it is unlikely to have been brought from far away (Thomas 1993, 82). The churchyard at Tintagel has evidence of very early post Roman burial – dated just over a century after the ‘milestone’ was set up (Nowakowski and Thomas 1992, 4-11) and a direct association with the settlement on the Island, where evidence of late Roman activity has recently been established beyond doubt (Thomas 1993, 84-5; Barrowman, Batey and Morris 2007, 309-313). The stone at Trethevey was found in a hamlet, close to a medieval chapel and holy well of St Piran. Neither has any proven early medieval antecedents, but the possibility must exist, especially since Domesday Book records the existence of a manor belonging to St Piran’s Monastery near Trethevey in 1086 (Thorn 1979, 5,8,10): a factor which must explain the dedications of the chapel and holy well, so far from the main places associated with this saint, in west Cornwall. With a name in *tre*, the settlement of Trethevey is likely to be of early medieval origin (Padel 1985, 223-232, especially 225).

In summary, two of the five Roman honorific pillar stones in Cornwall have a close association with a possibly contemporary settlement enclosure. Four have a direct association with a later ecclesiastical site. In one case (Tintagel) the gap in time between Roman and post Roman activity is so short that continuity must be a possibility. One has an association with a holy well. Three (Breage, St Hilary, Trethevey) are also settlements of medieval through to modern date. There is no evidence of settlement activity at Tintagel Church, but the Roman and post Roman activity on the Island is undoubted. Roads are an unproven possibility at all of the sites.

What do these associations mean, if anything? Is it pure coincidence that ecclesiastical sites developed around the Roman honorific pillars? Did the stones’ significance attract later religious activity? Were the stones set up within contemporary settlements, perhaps inhabited by the individuals responsible for tax collection in the area? Perhaps they were focal settlements of the sort that were likely to become parochial centres at a later date? Or did the sites already have a ritual function: which they maintained into Christian times?

In all, it seems a distinct possibility to the present author (with admittedly limited knowledge and understanding of the Roman period) that four of the Roman ‘honorific pillars’ may be associated with contemporary settlement and may (if we can read back from the later functions of the sites) have had a ritual, as well as a purely utilitarian or propaganda function. At the date these stones were erected, the Roman emperors were venerated as gods [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_cult_\(ancient_Rome\)#cite_note-252](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_cult_(ancient_Rome)#cite_note-252)

and in this remote outpost of the empire, is it impossible that the stones could have marked places of devotion, even shrines, either for Roman officials involved in tax collection, or for veneration by the wider populace. In this light, they can also be seen as related to the inscribed memorial stones which characterise the early Christianity of Cornwall from the late fifth century.

In conclusion, although it is admitted that some of the thoughts presented here may be misguided or naïve, it is nonetheless considered to be of interest that four of the five Roman honorific pillars found in Cornwall should be associated with later ecclesiastical sites (or three, if Breage’s findspot of one hundred yards away is not permissible): all of which are likely to be themselves of early medieval origin.

There is a final point of interest worth noting, although no obvious explanation occurs. That is that there are five ‘honorific pillars’ in Cornwall, but only one in Devon, at Exeter. Stones of this sort are frequent in the militarised zones: perhaps this is a further indication, with the two forts that have recently been discovered, that the Roman presence was greater in Cornwall than hitherto suspected.

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