Cross Gates Cross, St Clether, Cornwall

Repair and restoration

Historic Environment Service (Projects)

Cornwall County Council

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Acknowledgements

Cover illustration

Before, during and after restoration of the cross

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Abbreviations

CCC	Cornwall County Council
EH	English Heritage
HER	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record
HES	Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County Council
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRN	Primary Record Number in Cornwall HER

Summary

In June 2004, the Cross Gates Cross, which had stood high on a hedge at SX 1888 8402, in the parish of St Clether, was found lying in the road. The lower part of the cross remained bedded in the hedge, with just a narrow section of freshly broken granite visible, to show where the upper part of the cross had disappeared. Both parts of the cross were rescued and taken to nearby Treboy Farm for safe keeping until a restoration project could be agreed.

The name of this cross is a clue to its original context: the Cross Gates Cross is named from the fact that when it was free-standing here, it was at a gateway leading from the enclosed parts of St Clether parish out onto the open moor beyond. The 1813 Ordnance Survey and 1840 Tithe Award maps demonstrate the fact that much of the land to the south-west of the cross has been enclosed within the last two hundred years; and the excavation of the lower part of the cross-shaft from the hedge revealed the fact that when these enclosures took place the cross had not been simply been put into the hedge as a safe place for display - it was in fact *in situ*, in its original base, the hedge having been built up to and around it in the 19th century.

When the cross was restored, it was replaced free-standing in its base, in the same orientation but on the wide verge opposite, where it would be both well displayed and safe from traffic. Without the hedge to disguise its stature the cross, which was formerly 1.5m high, now stands an impressive 2.24 metres above ground level, with another 0.73 metres buried below ground level in the restored base.

The Cross Gates Cross is number 17716 in Cornwall County Council's Historic Environment Record and is a Scheduled Monument, number 30539. Originally located at SX 18869 84077, it now stands at SX 18896 84009.

Introduction

The Cross Gates Cross is a medieval granite wayside cross, one of a notable group in the parish of St Clether. It was damaged in June 2004 when, it is thought, it was hit by a lorry. The top part of the cross, having been retrieved from the roadside verge, was taken for safe keeping to nearby Treboy Farm, leaving the lower part still embedded in the hedge. Discussions on how best to repair and restore the cross immediately ensued. This report describes the processes and problems involved in finally achieving that restoration, in June 2005. It was by no means the straightforward task first assumed.

1.1 Aims

The overall aim of the project was to repair the cross and restore it to its original position at the road junction as soon as possible, while giving careful consideration to ensuring that the cross would be less vulnerable to damage of this sort in the future. One suggestion, made at a very early stage, was that it could be re-located to the wide verge on the opposite side of the road.

1.2 Objectives of proposed management work

These were to

- Remove the lower part of the cross shaft from the hedge, so that the cross could be appropriately repaired

- Carefully rebuild the hedge

- Repair the broken cross, using non-corrosive fixings to ensure the long-term stability of the joint

- Restore the cross to the cross-roads from which it came

- Give consideration to *either* 1. setting the cross into the hedge in its original location, in such a way that it would be both visible and safe from future accidents, *or* 2. removing the cross to another location at the cross-roads, where it would be less vulnerable to future accidents. It was felt that a wide verge to the south of the existing location may be appropriate.

2 Background

2.1 Location and setting

2.1.1 Topography and settlement

Although located on the north-eastern fringe of Bodmin Moor, the parish of St Clether has varied bedrock consisting not granite, but of volcanic tuffs and lavas, Carboniferous Culm Measures and Upper Devonian slates. With heights within the parish ranging from 180 to 300 metres above sea level, this is a high and exposed part of Cornwall, yet it has some sheltered and delightful parts, for the parish is essentially laid out around the valley of the north-west to south-east flowing River Inny and its tributaries. But while the focus of the parish is the river that flows through it, its frame is the high ground that lies beyond. To the south-west lies Bodmin Moor, where Davidstow Moor, Bray Down and Roughtor dominate the horizon. To the north and east, on the opposite bank of the Inny, lies a ridge along which the A395 now runs but which was, in the past, another large area of open rough ground, although since enclosure in the 19th century, few relics survive to indicate its former nature. Nowadays the best indicator of the exposed environment here is the Cold

Northcott Windfarm. The OS 1st edition one-inch map of 1813 however gives a good idea of the former extent of rough ground in the parish (Fig 2) and this is summarised on the Cornwall Landscape Assessment 1994 Historic Landscape Map (Cornwall County Council 1996). At the heart of the parish, on the more sheltered slopes between the rivers and the moors are the anciently settled parts of the parish, where the many hamlets and farms with names beginning in *tre-* indicate settlements of early medieval origin. Close to the eastern edge of the parish, directly overlooking the Inney, is the parish church of St Clether, with the famed holy well and chapel a short distance upstream. Like the settlements, these ecclesiastical sites are likely to have been founded and used since the early medieval period, although the earliest architectural remains at the church date to Norman times and the holy well and chapel's buildings are late 15th or early 16th century, rebuilt in the late 19th century.

The distribution of the medieval-recorded settlements and ecclesiastical sites in relation to the rivers and open rough ground in the parish of St Clether is shown in Fig 5; it should be noted that as the location of three of the recorded medieval settlements is lost, the pattern shown on the map must be regarded as indicative rather than definitive. At any rate, the map shows a relatively small settled area at the centre of the parish, the settlements fairly evenly dispersed along the sloping valley sides, and surrounded to north and south by large tracts of rough ground. Unusually, the church is situated close to the eastern edge of the parish. Of the settlements in the parish, the only place of any significance appears to have been Basil, opposite the church on the south side of the River Inney. Though not recorded in Domesday Book, this was at some time a seat of the Trevelyan family (Moule 1838).

2.1.2 St Clether Crosses

The parish of St Clether has a notable group of medieval stone crosses, all of very similar design (Fig 6). In 1896, AG Langdon in *Old Cornish Crosses* recorded them as Basil 1, 2, 3 and 4, noting that they all lay within the area of Basil Barton. Since then, two others have been discovered within the parish, at Ta Mill and Trefrank (Langdon 1998-9), again of the same distinctive pattern, the Ta Mill cross being exceptionally tall. The crosses all lie on roads, tracks and paths leading from surrounding farms and moors towards the church and holy well (Fig 5). There are three crosses on the north side of the River Inney and three on the south, all fairly evenly spaced apart from two close to Basil Barton. Two of the crosses (Langdon's Basil 1 and 4) relate to fords or bridging points, Basil 1 to a crossing of the River Inney from Basil to the church. The Cross Gates Cross is located, as the name suggests, at the gateway from the enclosed parts of the parish out onto the open rough ground.

The style of the crosses, which all feature a simple equal-armed cross within a bead on the head and projections at the neck, suggests a broadly 12th century date (compare the dating of the St Buryan crosses in Preston-Jones and Langdon 1997, 119). It is likely that they were all unusually tall.

The similarity of all these crosses has led to the suggestion that they may have been carved at the same time, perhaps even by the same mason (Langdon 1992). Such a concentration of crosses is unusual too and may relate to the patronage of a significant individual or manor. The association with Basil is overwhelmingly suggestive. However, the concentration may also indicate that the church and/or holy well were of some unique significance at the time the crosses were carved. The holy well is a very special feature that marks St Clether out nowadays: and it is tempting to link the crosses to phases in the use of that site pre-dating the existing buildings.

2.2   History of the Cross Gates Cross

The first record of the Cross Gates Cross is on the first edition Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of c 1880 (Fig 4), when it is marked in the position that it occupied up until the accident. Langdon in 1896 (*Old Cornish Crosses*, 158) gives the first full description of the monument and he corroborates the fact that it stood in a hedge at a cross-roads in the southern part of the parish of St Clether, on a road leading directly to the parish church. He is also the first person to record the name of the location as 'Cross Gates'.

It had always been assumed that the cross was not *in situ*, but very close to its original location (see for example Langdon 1992, 24). This location, at a junction on a route leading to the parish church, is entirely typical of medieval wayside crosses. As the boundary into which the cross was built did not exist in 1843 (*Tithe Map* – Fig 3) it seemed likely that the cross had been built into the boundary at the time the hedge was built, sometime between 1843 and 1880, having perhaps been lifted from a position nearby on the roadside verge.

2.3   Description of the monument prior to damage and restoration

This is a typical wheel-headed Cornish wayside cross, with relief-carved equal-armed cross within a raised bead on the head, and small rounded projections at the neck. It is carved from a relatively thin slab of granite. Prior to damage, the visible part was overall 1.55m high, only 0.14m thick, 0.66m wide at the head and with a 0.46m wide shaft. An unknown length of shaft was set into the hedge.

2.4   Condition of the monument prior to restoration

Ever since it has been recorded the cross has, as noted above, been set into the top of a hedge at SX 18869 84077. More recently, it had been partly hidden by a healthy growth of shrubs and weeds. And ever since it was first Scheduled (possibly in the 1930s), the fact that it leans slightly outwards from the hedge has been noted. See Figure 7.

On June 17th 2004, it was discovered that the cross had been broken in two. The upper part of the cross was found lying in the road by Mr Parnell of Tregulland, St Clether, the owner of the land adjoining and therefore owner of the cross. It was rescued soon after by Mr Ham of nearby Treboy Farm, and taken back to his yard where it was stored safely on a wooden pallet (Fig 8). For the time being, the lower part of the shaft remained buried in the hedge, with a sliver of fresh granite visible to mark its position. Other than the break across the cross-shaft, there appeared to have been no other significant damage, either to the cross or to the hedge in which it was located. Fortunately, the break was a clean one, and at the time it was predicted that it should be relatively easy to repair. *How little did we know!*

Although at first thought to have been the subject of attempted theft, it is now believed that the cross was hit by a lorry. A lorry is known to have backed and turned at this cross roads on the morning that the damage occurred, and it is quite likely that as the cross was both leaning out from the hedge and obscured by leaves, the lorry driver would not have noticed it. A small smudge of red on the head of the cross might have been paint from the lorry.

Though strong, granite is also very brittle and a sudden blow could easily cause a shaft as narrow as this to crack and snap.

3 Recording

As there was to be no substantial change to the form of the cross except, possibly, to its location, photographs and notes were deemed to be an appropriate level of recording, with the need for a watching brief when the lower part of the shaft was removed from the 19th century hedge-bank into which the cross was built.

The following specification was drawn up for recording within this project:

1. Monitor and photograph the removal of the lower part of the cross-shaft from the hedge.

2. Discuss and agree a method for repairing and restoring the cross.

3. Be on site to monitor all work.

4. Measure and sketch the cross while its full length is out of the ground and exposed.

5. Take a full set of photos (colour prints, colour slides and black and white prints) of the cross before restoration, as work proceeds, and on completion of the work.

6. Make full notes of the procedures involved and of any observations made as the repair work takes place – particularly on the nature of fixings and materials used to unite the two halves of the shaft.

3.1   Results of the recording: the excavation of the lower part of the cross

This took place on the evening of 22nd July 2004 and involved a variety of people, chief amongst whom were Mr and Mrs Lawson Ham from Treboy, Mr Parnell from Tregulland, Andrew Langdon and Ann Preston-Jones (Fig 9).

3.1.1 Summary of events

We had envisaged that the excavation of the shaft would involve simply plucking a length of perhaps 0.6 metres from the hedge, with the need for little if any excavation. It was not expected that the cross was *in situ*: rather we thought that the cross had been placed in the hedge when the latter was built, at some time between 1840 and 1880. In the event, we discovered that the cross had actually been *in situ*, with the shaft still set into its large slate base, the base set within the hedge some 0.4 metres above the present level of the road.

Removal of both shaft and base therefore involved a fairly substantial excavation of the hedge bank. The shaft was removed first by Mr Ham's mini excavator, and the base then lifted out by Mr Parnell's tractor, with a fork-lift mounted on the front.

After the excavation of the shaft and base, the hedge bank was rebuilt, and the parts of the cross removed to places of safety: the cross-shaft to join its head at Treboy Farm, and the base to a hidden corner in a field adjoining the cross-roads.

3.1.2 The hedge

No more of the hedge was disturbed than was absolutely necessary in order to excavate out the cross-shaft and base. It is a 2m wide earth bank, 1.7 metres high above the road and approximately 0.8m high above the field to the north, built of a fine, medium yellowish-brown sandy soil, with occasional large stones, and densely run through with tree roots, especially in the top half metre or so. Apart from a thin, darker, more humic layer at the surface, there was no variation in the build of the hedge, except in relation to the cross-base. The latter was found to be set within the hedge, on the well constructed clay layer described below, 0.4 metres above the level of the road. Because it was not necessary, the hedge was not excavated below this depth.

3.1.3 The cross base

The slate cross-base found within the hedge was not level, but angled out slightly towards the road, exactly as the cross had been. It is assumed that this lean reflects the angle of the cross before the hedge was built up to it, for after this time the hedge would have acted as a buttress, supporting the cross. The base was found to be neatly bedded on a thin layer of light coloured, mottled clay (white/pink/yellow), and showing as a shiny and smooth surface when the base was removed. This was in turn laid on a layer of small stones with larger stones beneath, altogether about 15 cm thick. This bed was not disturbed, but was re-buried within the hedge, with a few coins thrown in to date the removal of the monument. No evidence was found to date the base: it is assumed that the cross was in its original medieval location, but this cannot be proved in any way, and it is quite possible that this represents a secondary location.

The slate base is cut from stone which is not local to Treboy, but which might be from the parish. Mr Ham noted that a quarry close to the church is a slate quarry and that he thought it possible that the stone could have been acquired from there.

The clay under the base must have been brought in especially for the purpose of levelling the base and providing a smooth surface to lay the stone on: for Mr Parnell, who owns the adjoining field, said that he has never noted such clay in the field.

3.1.4 The cross

Excavated from the ground, its stature fully revealed, the cross was found to be a total of 2.97 metres (9 ft 9 ins) long. The fracture is 1.17 metres (3 ft 10 ins) from the bottom of the cross – which had broken at exactly the level of the top of the hedge into which it had been set.

Though broken, the cross appears to be entire, the bottom 15 ins of the cross being recessed very slightly to form a tenon.

4 The restoration of the cross

4.1 Preparation

Once the base had been discovered, the decision on where and how to restore the cross became a relatively simple one. In theory there were two options:

1. To restore the cross into its original position in the hedge, but with the hedge rebuilt around the back of the cross so that its full height within the base could be displayed.

2. To restore the cross in its base on the wide verge on the opposite side of the road, where it would be both well displayed and safe from traffic.

Either way, consultation with Cornwall County Council's (CCC's) Planning, Transportation and Estates department was necessary as the cross was likely to end up on a roadside verge and therefore in County Council ownership. However, at a meeting with CCC on Wednesday 20th October (the original date of 17th August having had to be postponed, as it was the day after the Boscastle floods) it emerged that there would be considerable problems with restoring the cross to its original position and building the hedge back behind it, as this would involve the transfer of the ownership of a considerable strip of land to enable an adequate splay to be designed on this corner. On the other hand, as CCC had no objection to the position on the verge opposite side of the road, this was

unanimously agreed. Here, the cross could form an attractive and conspicuous feature *and* be in safety, well back from the edge of the road.

Accordingly, plans were made for re-erecting the cross in the new location on the verge at the north-east side of the road junction, starting with the base which had to be installed and allowed to consolidate before the cross could be set up in it.

4.2   The base

The base was put into place on Saturday 4th December, by a team comprising David Attwell and Andrew Langdon, Tommy Rose-Jones and Reuben Butts, Ann Preston-Jones and Lawson Ham (Fig 10). David Attwell supplied all materials and co-ordinated the work; Mr Ham operated the machine used to lift the base into position.

Although there was no question of doing anything other than using the original base in the restoration of the cross, there was a real problem regarding its size. Although the six inch thick slab of slate had been deemed adequate for the task of supporting the ten foot high cross by the medieval masons who first set it up, we did not have quite such confidence, given modern Health and Safety considerations. It was therefore decided that the old base should be supplemented with a substantial concrete footing, to give the cross a greater depth of support.

Initially, turf was lifted from the area to be occupied by the new base; this was reserved for re-turfing and making good around the edge of the base later on.   A vertical-sided hole, 4ft x 6ft and 9in (1.2 x 1.85 x 0.23 metre) deep was cut into the verge and a wooden shuttering built all around the edge. After carefully measuring the old base and working out how this would sit on the concrete foundation, the position of the mortise was also shuttered, and a 1:4 concrete mix poured in to create the foundation, leaving a 14 x 21in (0.36 x 0.53 metre) hole near the centre, for the mortise.   Using a telescopic handler operated by Mr Ham, the cross-base was then slid onto the concrete base before the concrete had set, taking care to ensure that the mortise in the cross base fitted exactly over the mortise in the foundation. The whole thing was then left to set.

4.3   The cross

The restoring of the cross involved many stages, was not the most straightforward of tasks, and was not finally complete until over a year after the damage had first occurred. The many stages leading to the completion of the work are recorded here.

1. Monday December 13th, 2004. At Treboy Farm, Ernie Hillson drilled and pinned the two portions of the cross, with the cross in a horizontal position. Two 10 inch (0.25 metre) long, three quarter inch diameter (2 cm) stainless steel pins were used, the pins being set into 1 inch diameter, 5 inch deep holes (25 x 12 cm) and the two halves of the cross joined with a polyester stone glue. Mr Ham assisted by manoeuvring the cross into position with a forklift truck (Fig 11). Because the break had been a clean one, the joint achieved was nearly perfect.

2. Saturday 18th December. An attempt was made to re-erect the cross, but as soon as lifting started the new joint began to separate and it was obvious that the entire cross could not be lifted in one go. So an alternative strategy, rapidly devised, was then attempted. The plan this time was to secure the bottom part of the shaft in place in the base and then to lift the upper part onto this, securing the joint with fresh glue. However, because the weather became increasingly wet as the morning progressed, only the bottom part of the shaft was put into place and the top part left for a better day. The lower part of the shaft was secured into the base with a

mortar consisting of hydrated lime and Cornish sand. It was orientated so that the cross head once restored would face in the same direction as the original. (Fig 12).

3. Saturday 8th January 2005. Proposed date for restoration of top half of cross is postponed due to very windy weather.

4. Saturday March 6th 2005. A second attempt was made to restore the top part of the cross. The weather was a problem, a fresh and blustery wind sweeping down from Davidstow Moor; but far worse was the fact that once the cross was lifted into position by Mr Ham's Hiab, and an attempt made to unite the two halves, they did not fit perfectly, necessitating more and more glue to try to achieve union. Moreover, in the cool conditions, the stone glue was extremely slow to go off, so it dripped out of the joint and down the shaft leaving gaping holes in the joint, and because it was not fully secured, the cross head could be seen swaying in the wind! This problem was exacerbated by the fact that the mortar in the base had not gone off, and was so soft that it could be scraped out with a finger. So to secure the cross while the glue slowly set, an effective wooden bracing was constructed by Mr Ham from fencing materials (Fig 13).

5. Several days later, Mr and Mrs Ham confirmed that glue had gone off and that the cross seemed solid. But for security, it was decided to leave the bracing in position for the time being as there remained considerable concern over what we knew to be a poor joint, low down, at the narrowest part of the top-heavy shaft. We felt that some form of additional support was needed to secure this joint.

6. Several months later, with the stormy winter weather out of the way and pending the provision of additional support for the joint, Mr Ham removed the wooden bracing. Safety issues aside, a notable problem now affecting the cross was the uneven joint and the blobs of glue on the shaft.

7. Friday 24th June. After much discussion on the best method of securing the joint, it was decided to put a threaded stainless steel bar right through the cross shaft both above and below the joint and to bolt these in place with a steel bar on front and back of the cross. Using a portable generator to provide power, the holes were drilled and steelwork put in place, to make the joint absolutely rigid. Though undoubtedly effective, the metal work looked conspicuously bright and shiny, and the ends of the bolts were left protruding beyond the steel bars and nuts.

8. Thursday 1st September. A final return was made to carry out aesthetic touches: to remove the drops of glue, cut the protruding ends from bolts, mortar the joint, remove and replace mortar in the top of the joint into the base, and smear mortar over the brackets to make them less conspicuous. Finally, the mortar was covered with mud to help tone it down.

As a result of all this work, the cross which was formerly 1.5m high, now stands an impressive 2.24 metres above ground level, with another 0.73 metres buried below ground level in the restored base (Fig 14).

5 Discussion

It is to be regretted that something that should have been a reasonably straightforward job turned into a difficult marathon. It is all the more sad that the accident happened at all to such a fine, tall monument which had been a rare *in situ* example. One of the problems was undoubtedly the fact that the break in the shaft occurred low down, and at the

narrowest part of the slim shaft, so that the cross was top heavy and the repair made to a point that was always vulnerable.

On the other hand, all the project's objectives were achieved (see above, section 1.2) and the result is nevertheless a striking monument whose final appearance gives no hint of the problems encountered in getting it into place. It still stands, in its original base, at the cross roads that it has guarded for perhaps eight hundred years, facing in exactly the same direction as formerly and only a short distance from its original location.

Postscript:

Two years after the work took place; it is good to note that the cross is still looking good, with no apparent problems resulting from the difficult restoration.

6 References

6.1 Primary sources

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7 Project archive

The HES project number is **2004006**

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is housed at the offices of the Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County 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 and copies of documentary/cartographic source material.

2. Black and white photographs archived under the following index numbers: GBPxxx

3. Colour slides archived under the following index numbers: GCSxxx

4. Digital photographs stored in the directory : R:\Images\HES Images\Sites, A-D\Basil cross, St Clether

5. This report held in digital form as: G:\CAU\HE PROJECTS\SITES\SITES B\BASIL CROSS PR 2004006\CROSS GATES CROSS REPORT.DOC
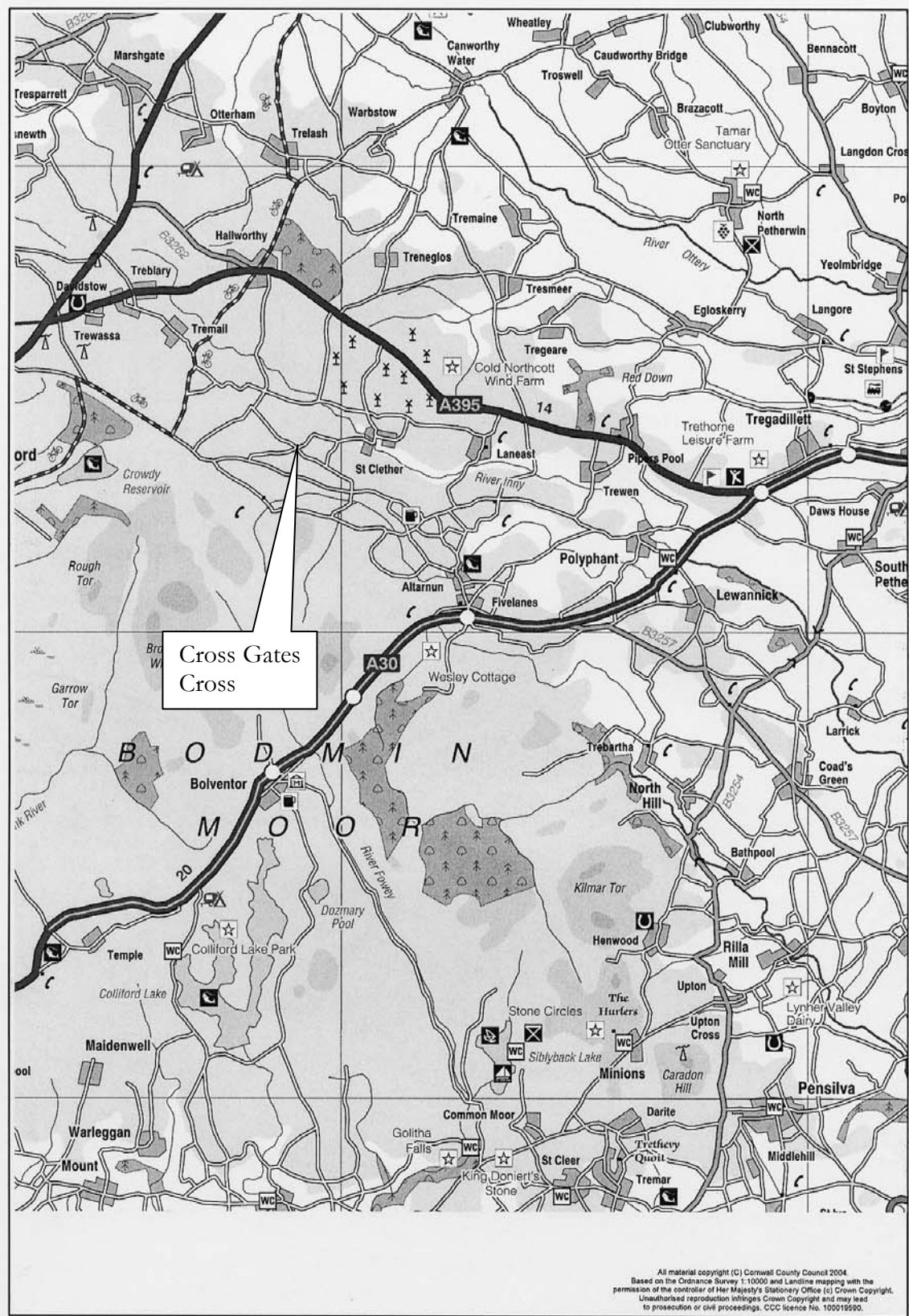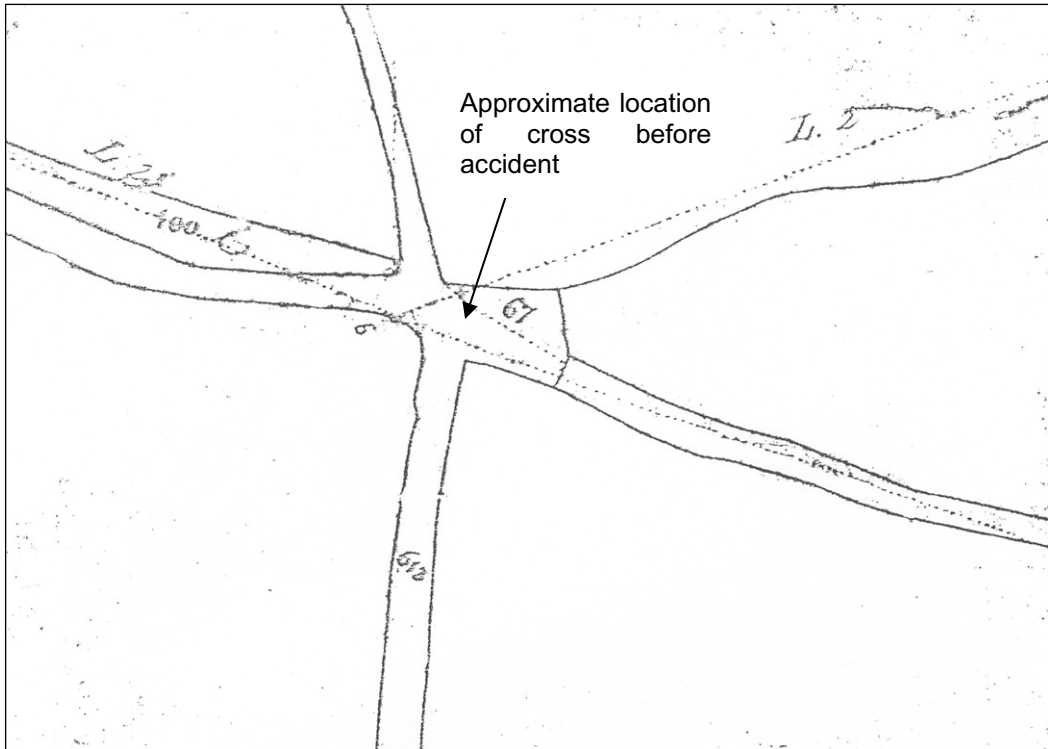
Fig 1 Location map

Fig 2   *OS 1st Edition one inch map, 1813*

Fig 3 Tithe Map, 1840

Fig 4 First Edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, c 1880

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Fig 5
Topography of the
medieval parish of
St Clether

Key

- Settlement
+ Cross
⚓ Church
■ Chapel
— Watercourses
▨ Rough ground

The enclosed land has
been plotted from modern
OS Master Map data

N

CORNWALL
COUNTY COUNCIL
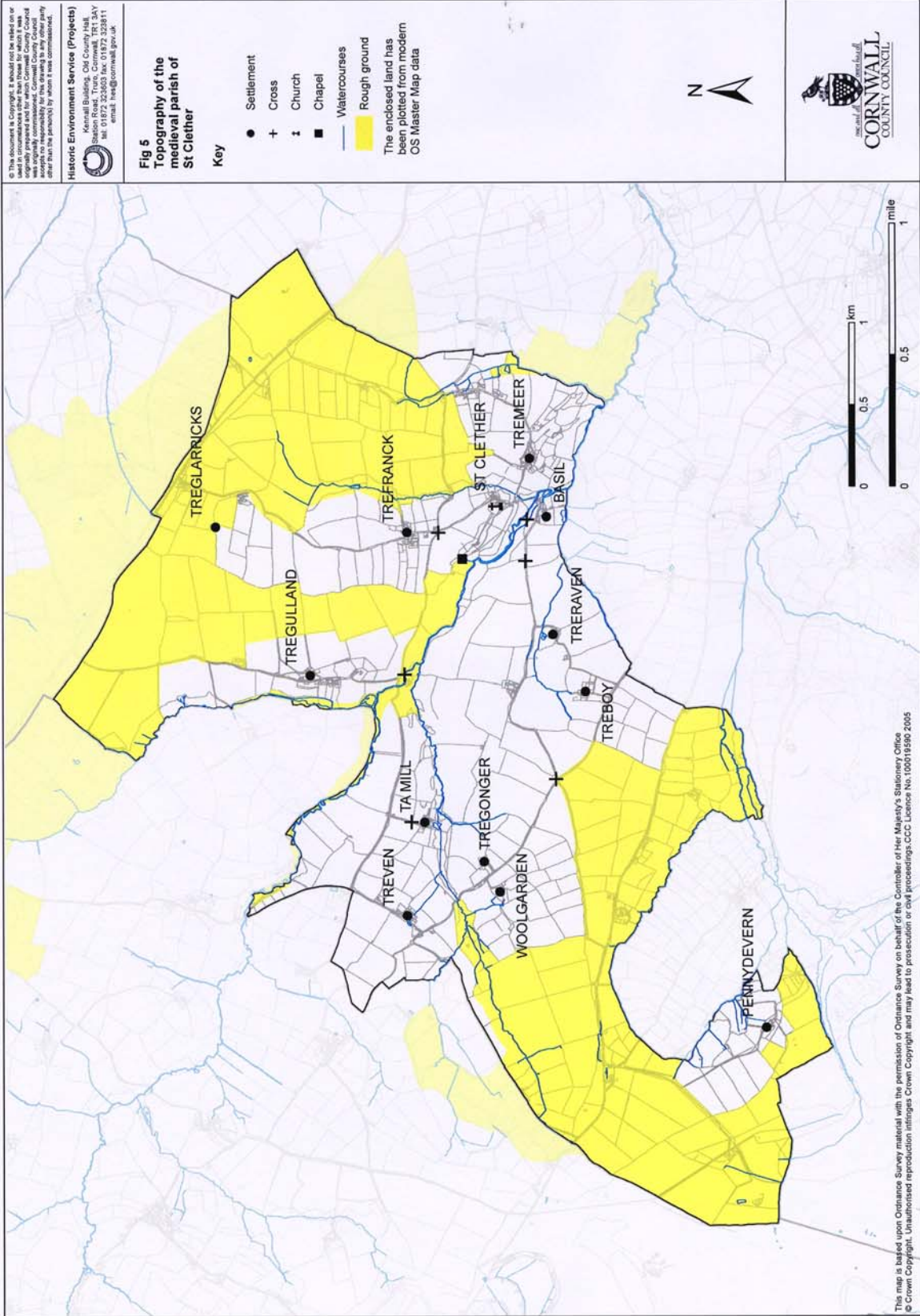
Fig   5 Map of the medieval parish of St Clether, showing settlements, crosses, church, holy well, rough and
       enclosed ground

ST CLETHER WAYSIDE CROSSES

TREFRANCK CROSS

TA MILL CROSS

TARRET BRIDGE
BASIL No.4

BESIDE THE
RIVER INNEY
BASIL No.1

NEWPARK CROSS

BASIL No.2

'CROSS GATES'
BASIL No.3

Fig 6 St Clether Crosses (based on Langdon 1896, with additions by Andrew Langdon

Fig 7 The Cross Gates Cross before the accident which damaged it

Fig 8 The cross head and shaft at Treboy Farm

Fig 9 Rescuing the shaft from the hedge: the shaft can be seen in the hedge at the centre of the picture

Fig 10 Removing the base from the hedge

Fig 11 The original base, restored on a new concrete foundation

Fig 12 Ernie Hillson drilling and pinning the cross, and to the right, the stainless steel pins in position

Fig 13 The restoration of the lower part of the shaft: : above, the shaft (note the stainless steel pins) is put into place and below, the shaft is mortared into the base by Reuben Butts and Tommy Rose-Jones

Fig 14 The restoration of the upper part of the cross.: above left, lifting the cross onto the lorry to take it to the site; above right, the two halves of the cross united and below, the restored cross, braced to prevent the new joint from moving in the wind.

Fig 15 The Cross Gates Cross restored