

# **Sancreed Churchyard Cornwall**

## **Repair and restoration of medieval granite wayside crosses**



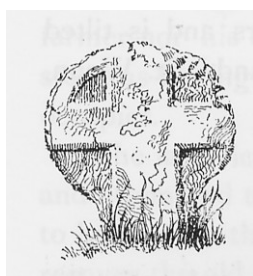
**Historic Environment Service (Projects)**

Cornwall County Council



# **Sancreed Churchyard Cornwall**

## **Repair and restoration of medieval granite wayside crosses**



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## **Acknowledgements**

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The repair was funded by the Scheduled Monument Management Project – a budget to which English Heritage, the Cornwall Heritage Trust and Cornwall County Council contributes. On site, the work was carried out by Adrian Thomas and David Cutting. Andrew Langdon gave much valuable help and advice.

## **Cover illustration**

The Sellan Cross, restored

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## Abbreviations

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

# **1 Summary**

This report describes the repair and restoration of two of the medieval crosses in the churchyard at Sancreed, which took place in 2004 and 2005. Both crosses were not originally located in the churchyard but are wayside crosses, brought into the churchyard for preservation, from Sellan and Anjarden farms in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Sellan Cross is located at SW 4204 2937 and is number 28712.72 in Cornwall County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER). The Anjarden Cross, located at SW 4204 2933 is HER number 28712.91. Both are Scheduled Monuments, numbers 29212 and 29213 respectively.

In the case of the Anjarden Cross, the restoration simply involved lifting the cross from the hedge in which it had been set and placing it in a new base in exactly the same location. The Sellan Cross, on the other hand, was lifted, repaired by replacing a corroded iron pin with one of stainless steel and then relocated, on a new base, to a new position some three metres to the south-west of the one it had formerly occupied.

The repair of the Anjarden Cross revealed the fact that the cross, originally of 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century date, may have been re-cut in the later part of the medieval period.





## **2 Introduction**

### **2.1 Project background**

In the churchyard at Sancreed is an outstanding group of five medieval stone crosses. The two tallest, decorated, crosses were originally designed as churchyard crosses, whereas the other three originated as wayside crosses, brought into the churchyard from outlying farms of the parish in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This report is concerned with recent repairs to two of the wayside crosses, originally from Sellan and Anjarden farms. Each of these was suffering problems associated with the fact that it was a century or so since their removal to the churchyard. The Anjarden Cross had slumped from the hedge into which it had been set; while the Sellan Cross had become very overgrown and had an open joint in the shaft which, it was feared, might be leading to corrosion of internal iron fixings.

The problems noted above were first recorded by the English Heritage Field Monument Warden (FMW) in 1995. At this stage, the Anjarden Cross was merely loose in the hedge; but by 2000, it was leaning at an alarming angle. Early in 2001, when the FMW met with the vicar and churchwarden at Sancreed to discuss these problems, there was general agreement to the need for repairs and to the suggestion that this could be funded and organised through the HES's (then Cornwall Archaeological Unit's) Scheduled Monument Management Project. However, with the occurrence of other priorities for funding, it took until January 2004 to initiate the action needed to restore these crosses and until January 2005 to complete the task.

The work also involved obtaining a Faculty from the Diocese of Truro. With the help of the vicar, the churchwarden and the Archdeacon of Truro, this was granted in June 2004.

### **2.2 Aims**

The aims of the project were therefore:

- Stabilisation of the two crosses
- Securing the two crosses within new granite bases
- Their improved presentation within a churchyard which is rich in historic features.
- To carry out appropriate archaeological recording: to record the crosses when they were removed from the ground and the details of the conservation work.

## **3 Background**

### **3.1 Location and setting**

The parish of Sancreed lies at the heart of the West Penwith granite peninsula (Fig 1), and is in fact the only land-locked parish in the area. The boundary follows high ground on the west and north and on the east, the line of the river which for part of its length has been dammed to form the Drift reservoir (Fig 5). At the northern extremity, the parish boundary lies along the same line as the A 3071 Penzance to St Just road and for part of its length on the south, the A 30 Penzance to Lands End road: the coincidence of roads and boundaries perhaps confirming their mutual antiquity. It is a predominantly upland parish, with the Commons of Boswens, Deveral and Receven occupying the north-western third; Bartinney Hill, Caer Bran and the Beacon in the west and in the south-west, the rough ground of Goldherring/Boscawen-un. The main areas of settlement in the parish are

along the side of the Drift Valley in the eastern part of the parish, and along the valleys of tributaries and streams cutting into the areas of higher ground in the west – where they occupy particularly the south-facing slopes. Sancreed church itself lies in a relatively marginal location in the southern half of the parish, at the foot of the open rough ground of The Beacon and Caer Bran.

A feature of Sancreed's church site is the impressive range of early Christian monuments. These include an early Christian memorial stone of possible 7<sup>th</sup> century date, a 10<sup>th</sup> century cross with inscription, and carved on the upturned pillar of the early inscription, a fine 13<sup>th</sup> century churchyard cross (Fig 6). Together, these imply that Sancreed had an importance which is not reflected by any documentation for early monastic status (by contrast with nearby St Buryan or Paul, see Olson 1989). Other notable Christian sites within the parish are the famed holy well of St Euny on the parish boundary in the west, the holy well and chapel on Chapel Downs near the church, as well as a chapel at Bosence, which may have functioned as a chapel of ease for the remoter northern part of the parish (Henderson 1960, 434-7; Preston-Jones 1998; Quiller Couch 1894, 27-9; 210). Perhaps the existence of the well of St Euny, whose location on the parish boundary and a major early routeway suggests that it is a very early feature in the landscape, had an influence in the establishment of what seems, from the monumental evidence, to have been a major early Christian focus in this upland part of Penwith.

Although now by-passed by the two major roads mentioned above, the parish is crossed diagonally by routeways leading from St Just in the north-west to Paul to the south-east and by an ancient trackway leading from Sennen, via Chapel Carn Brea and the footslopes of Bartinney Hill, past Chapel Euny Well and Caer Bran, to the north of the Beacon, and so on to Madron and the Penzance area. Wayside crosses within the parish relate to these, as well as to minor paths and tracks linking the outlying farms and hamlets to the parish church. Interestingly, as the examples described here show, they may also relate to local farm boundaries.

The wayside crosses are generally believed to be of 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century date: associated with the formalisation of parochial boundaries in Norman times, and the building of the parish church. Stylistically, as Fig 6 shows, Sancreed's wayside crosses are a reasonably coherent group, most having a very simple latin cross with parallel-sided arms carved in high relief on the head. Only the Brane and Trenuggo Hill crosses vary slightly, in having the cross incised rather than relief-carved.

## **3.2 History and description of the monuments**

### **3.2.1 The Sellan Cross**

This cross was first recorded in 1856, by JT Blight, who found it lying on the ground beside a stile at Sellan. By 1886 it had been moved to the position it occupied until the recent management work, against a wall just outside the east wall of the old part of the churchyard. When Langdon (1896, 70) was writing, the cross was in an area belonging to the vicarage known as 'the Nursery', but by 1910, the ground here had been consecrated as an extension to the churchyard (Langdon 1997, 56) and in the 1920s, a grave was dug right up against the cross.

Ian Cooke notes that 'the original site of the cross at *Dead Man's Grave*, situated at a junction of the churchway from Roskennals and the present minor road ....shows that it once stood by what was part of an old pack horse trail between Skimmel Bridge and Boleppa linking Lands End and the Penzance area: this point also marked the junction of the four tenements of Sellan, Little Sellan, Roskennals and Bosvenning only a few yards north of three chapel fields to which the cross may also have related'.

This is a wheel-headed cross, with a plain latin cross in relief, within a bead, on the head and part of the shaft. When recorded by Langdon, the cross stood 76 cm high, with a shaft 32cm wide and 19cm thick. The head is 56cm across.

### **3.2.2 The Anjarden Cross**

When recorded by Langdon in 1896 (91-92) this cross stood on top of a hedge only a quarter of a mile south of the church. It was moved to its present position, on top of the wall between the road and the 1910 graveyard extension in 1914 (Langdon 1997, 55).

According to Ian Cooke (2001, 85), when it stood in this former location, the site lay 'on the churchway from Tregonebris by a small *Cross* field close to the meeting of Anjarden, Chiverton and Glebe tenements'.

Langdon (1896) described and illustrated the Anjarden Cross as a granite wheel-headed monument, with a relief-carved latin crosses on the head. For him, it was of particular interest because it combined the two methods most commonly employed in forming the crosses on the stones. 'The upper portion of the emblem is produced by sinking the two triangular spaces and enclosing them on the outer side, while in the lower portion the whole of the background is sunk..'. At the time he was writing and indeed until recently, only the head and a small part of the shaft (with a total height of about half a metre) were visible above the hedge into which it was built.

## **3.3 Condition of the monuments prior to restoration**

### **3.3.1 The Sellan Cross**

A number of problems affected the Sellan Cross:

1. It was not securely set, and could be moved when pushed.
2. The joint linking the two parts of the cross was not sealed with mortar and was therefore open to rainwater penetration. It was assumed that the central pin was of iron (highly probable in a 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration) and that this was likely to be corroding and expanding, causing damage to the granite of the cross-shaft. A good example of the damage caused by corroding iron can in fact be seen in the porch at Sancreed Church, where large flakes of granite have broken off as a result of the rusting and expansion of iron door fittings (Fig 9).
3. At times, the cross was completely obscured by scrub and weeds growing at the base of the churchyard wall.

### **3.3.2 The Anjarden Cross**

This cross was very loose and unstable, and leant at an angle of nearly 45 degrees from the vertical, into the graveyard extension. The problem was presumed to be the result of deterioration of the hedge into which it was set – the loss of the earth core causing a loosening of stones and lack of support for the cross.

There was also a threat to the safety of visitors to the graveyard and a threat to the cross, which could have been damaged if it fell completely, onto a nearby granite-edged grave. A further slight threat was that of theft. With the cross loose, it could be relatively easily plucked out of the hedge with appropriate machinery. Although there have been no attempted thefts of crosses in Cornwall recently (the last one being the Reperry Cross, in 1993), at least one cross on Dartmoor has been stolen within the last year.

## 4 Recording

As the restoration did not involve any substantial change to the crosses, other than in the re-location of the Sellan Cross, the recording needs were limited to photographs and notes. In particular:

1. A full set of photos (colour prints, colour slides and black and white prints) was taken of the cross before restoration, as work proceeded, and on completion of the work.
2. Full notes were made of the procedures involved in the restoration. These are described in detail below.
3. Any observations relevant to the conservation of the cross were recorded – for example, the nature of the old fixings and dowel holes and methods used to re-fix the central pin.

### 4.1 Results of the recording

#### 4.2 The Sellan Cross

The most noteworthy discoveries concerning this cross related to its 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration, which had presumably been undertaken when the cross was moved into the churchyard in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the cross was repaired with a central iron pin and with an external iron staple, uniting the two halves on one side only.

Both staple and central pin had been fixed into place with thin iron feathers, not lead, as might have been expected at that date. The holes drilled for the fixing were all approximately 1" diameter and of roughly triangular section, indicating that they had been cut by hand. The holes within the shaft were 3 ¼ ins (9.5 cm) deep in the top of the shaft and 3 ¼ ins (8.25 cm) deep into the lower part. The iron pin, originally 5/8 ins (1.5 cm) diameter, but expanded by corrosion, was just over 6 ins (15 cm) long. The 12 ins (30.05 cm) long staple was fixed into holes drilled 3 ins (7.5 cm) deep into the face of the cross-shaft. This was made from an iron bar originally 5/8 x 3/8 ins (1.5 x 0.9 cm) in size but worked into a circular section for insertion into the drill holes in the cross..

Once out of the ground, the cross was found to be 1.07 metres (3 ft 6 ins) long in all and broken at the bottom of the shaft. Originally, it may have stood perhaps 6 ft tall.

Restoration of the cross in its new position involved the removal of a shallow skim of turf only: there were no significant finds.

#### 4.3 The Anjarden Cross

The significant new discovery about this cross was that the head is large and out of proportion in relation to the shaft which, apart from being narrow, has the unusual feature of a hollow chamfer. This chamfer, which can be seen clearly in Fig 12, blends smoothly into the cross head where, as Langdon notes, the whole of the head is sunk, so that there is no bead around the edge, as with the Sellan Cross. On the upper part of the head, however, vestigial traces of a former bead do remain. The narrowness of the shaft compared to the head, taken in conjunction with the chamfer, may suggest that the shaft has been re-cut to create this form, which is unusual for a wayside cross. Perhaps the lower part of the head was re-dressed at the same time, by removing any bead, in order to help the re-dressed shaft merge with the head. With a good light, possible slight traces of a former bead around the lower part of the head may be detected, though there is nothing

completely conclusive about this. The hollow shape of the chamfer would suggest a date in the later part of the medieval period: perhaps the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The context for such a re-cutting of the head and shaft is however completely unknown.

The full length of the cross when out of the ground was found to be 1.06 metres (3 ft 6 ins); with the 0.28 x 0.18 metre wide (11 x 7 in) shaft completely parallel-sided, not tapering or uneven in any way as many crosses are: this may be a further indication of a re-cutting.

A number of finds were made on cutting into the hedge in order to replace the cross and its new base. The finds, which were all modern, were recorded by Daniel Rose-Jones. They included a coffin handle, three small bits of mortar, one fragment of bone, one old jam jar and a small piece of white china.

## **5 The conservation work**

The work to both of these crosses took place from July 2004 to January 2005. It was carried out by Adrian Thomas and David Cutting, stonemasons of Nanquidno, St Just.

### **5.1 The Sellan Cross**

In summary, the restoration of the Sellan Cross involved lifting it, removing the iron pin and replacing it with one of stainless steel, and then re-setting the cross on a new granite base. As the cross had been obscured behind a grave and overwhelmed by shrubs, it was moved to a more prominent location just to the south of the eastern entrance to the old churchyard, where it would not again become overgrown and overlooked.

The Sellan Cross was lifted and removed from the churchyard on the day after the Anjarden Crosss had been restored, that is, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2004. It was taken back to the workshop in Nanquidno, in order to repair the joint in the shaft and to fit the cross to its new base.

The repair of this cross proved a difficult and delicate task because, as predicted, the old iron fixing within the shaft was rusting and starting to crack the granite, which already had a line of weakness through the centre of the shaft, so that there was a serious threat that while undertaking the restoration the cracks might further open and cause flakes of granite to come away. The work was additionally complicated by the fact that the original hole drilled for the iron dowel was not absolutely vertical. Moreover, there was an external iron staple holding the two halves of the granite together, which had to be removed first.

In view of the weakness of the granite, it was felt necessary to deepen the central hole to 8" in the lower and 6" deep into the upper part of the shaft, so that the fixing would be into more solid granite and able to support the weight of the upper part of the shaft. A borer with a 20mm head was used, the shaft being held firmly with jack-up bandages while the drilling was taking place.

While in the workshop, the new base was prepared. This is a substantial dressed block of granite (0.95 x 0.72 x 0.25 metres thick), neatly cut but rough dressed and ideal for the semi-formal new location close to the church. Into this, a mortice 0.35 x 0.22 x 0.23 metres deep was cut. In order to provide a level base for the cross to rest on in the mortice, and so as to avoid cutting too deeply into the new base and therefore cutting right through it, 3cm had to be removed from the broken bottom of the cross-shaft.

The cross was hosed down prior to returning it to the churchyard, so that the cleaned granite would match better with the fresh new base.

The new base was installed into its new position, against the eastern boundary wall of Sancreed Churchyard, on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2005. As the base was so bulky, and the access to the chosen spot complicated by narrow churchyard gates and a 0.75m lift from the churchyard path, the work took up much of the day, and involved the erection of a scaffold tower to lift the base into position. Turf was lifted before settling the base into position, to enable the latter to be securely bedded, and then replaced around it afterwards.

The final restoration of the Sellan Cross took place on the morning of Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> January. Again, a scaffold tower was used, allowing first the lower part of the shaft, with new pin already firmly bedded in it, to be lifted into the base. This having been secured with wooden wedges, the upper part of the cross was lowered carefully onto the shaft. Having checked that this appeared upright and secure the head was lifted, and glue (Akemi normal, transparent polyester stone resin) applied to the upper part of the pin and the joint, before finally re-uniting the two parts of the cross, which now stands 0.86 metres high above its 0.25 metre high base.

After this, the cross was secured in its base with a lime-based mortar and the next day, after the glue had gone off, the joint in the cross-shaft was also finished with lime mortar. The two holes for the iron staple (which had been set facing towards the wall) were similarly filled (Fig 13).

## **5.2 The Anjarden Cross**

The Anjarden Cross was lifted from the churchyard wall in July 2004, and taken back to the workshop at Nanquidno, to enable the new base to be properly cut and fitted for the cross. On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2004, it was finally restored to the churchyard. In order to achieve greatest stability, and to accommodate the shape of the chunky and rectangular new base, the cross was set in exactly the same location, but on the inner edge of the hedge, with the bottom of the base at about the ground level of the churchyard, and the cross facing into the churchyard. It remains visible from the road, however, as it stands up above the level of the top of the hedge by about half a metre (Fig ). Scrub was cut from the outer face of the hedge in order to improve visibility from this side.

The base, of granite, measures 1 x 0.55 metres wide and 0.18 m high. The cross now stands 0.83 metres above the level of the base, with 0.4 m of its shaft now visible – a considerable gain on the previous situation, giving the cross far more stature and presence than formerly, and making it quite a feature in this part of the churchyard.

## **6 Conclusion**

The restoration of both these crosses was a necessity which has now been addressed, but in each case, there has also been a gain in terms of their presentation within the churchyard at Sancreed.

The Anjarden Cross is now entirely secure in its new position and because it sits in a solid base, it should not be at risk of collapsing from the hedge again. As noted above, it also looks a good deal more impressive than previously, and an additional gain is the fact that a good deal more of the cross is now visible, with its neat, possibly re-cut shaft a puzzle for future cross-enthusiasts to mull over.

The repair of the Sellan Cross was a very timely move, as the rusting central pin would, before long, have completely shattered the granite, necessitating a far more difficult conservation job. Moreover, in the position it now occupies, the cross forms an attractive and eye-catching feature from the main entrance to the churchyard, while at the same time

fitting harmoniously here. Its scale and appearance blends with the low granite wall behind and the well-chosen, square granite base forms a neat step alongside the granite coping of the adjoining churchyard path.

## 7 References

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## 8 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, copies of documentary/cartographic source material.
2. Black and white photographs archived under the following index numbers: **GBP 1764 and 1768**
3. Colour slides archived under the following index numbers: **GCS 34742-34765**
4. Digital photographs stored in the directory G:\CAU\Images\SITES.Q-T\Sancreed churchyard crosses
5. Digital maps stored in the directory L:\CAU\HE\_Projects\Sites\_S\Sancreed Crosses
6. This report held in digital form as: G:\CAU\HE PROJECTS\SITES\SITES S\SANCREED CROSSSES 2004\SANCREED CROSS REPORT.DOC



Fig 1 Location map



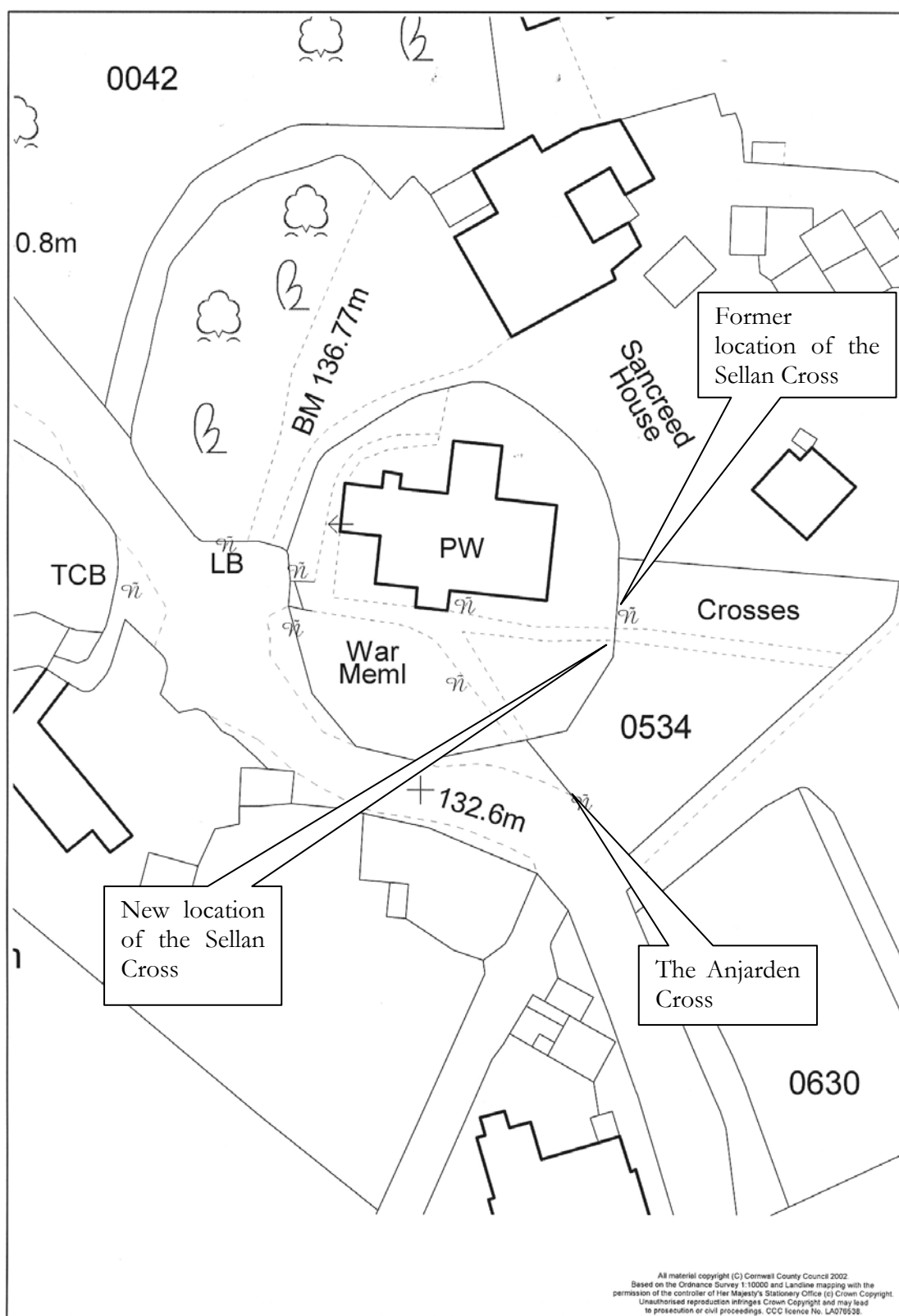
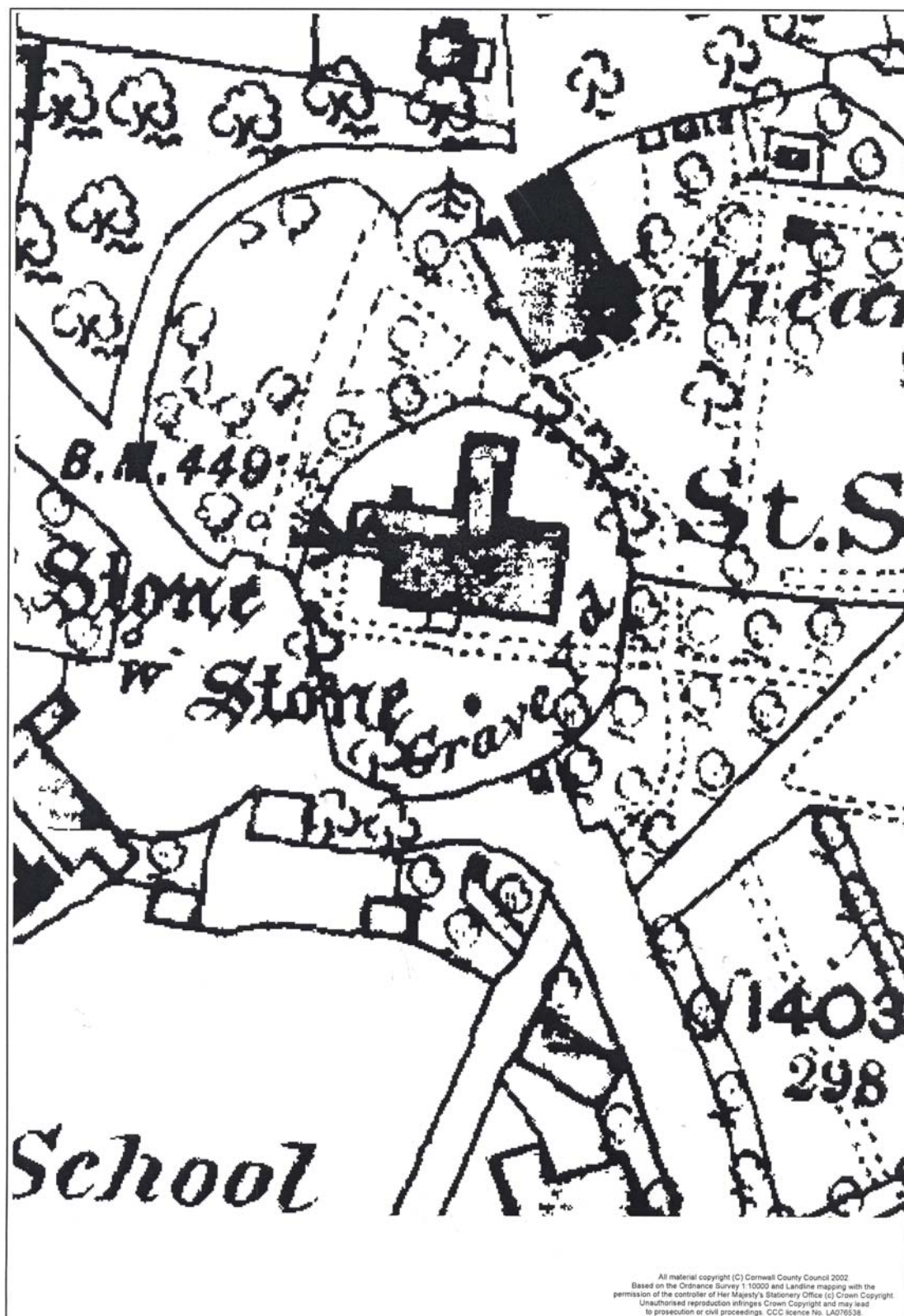
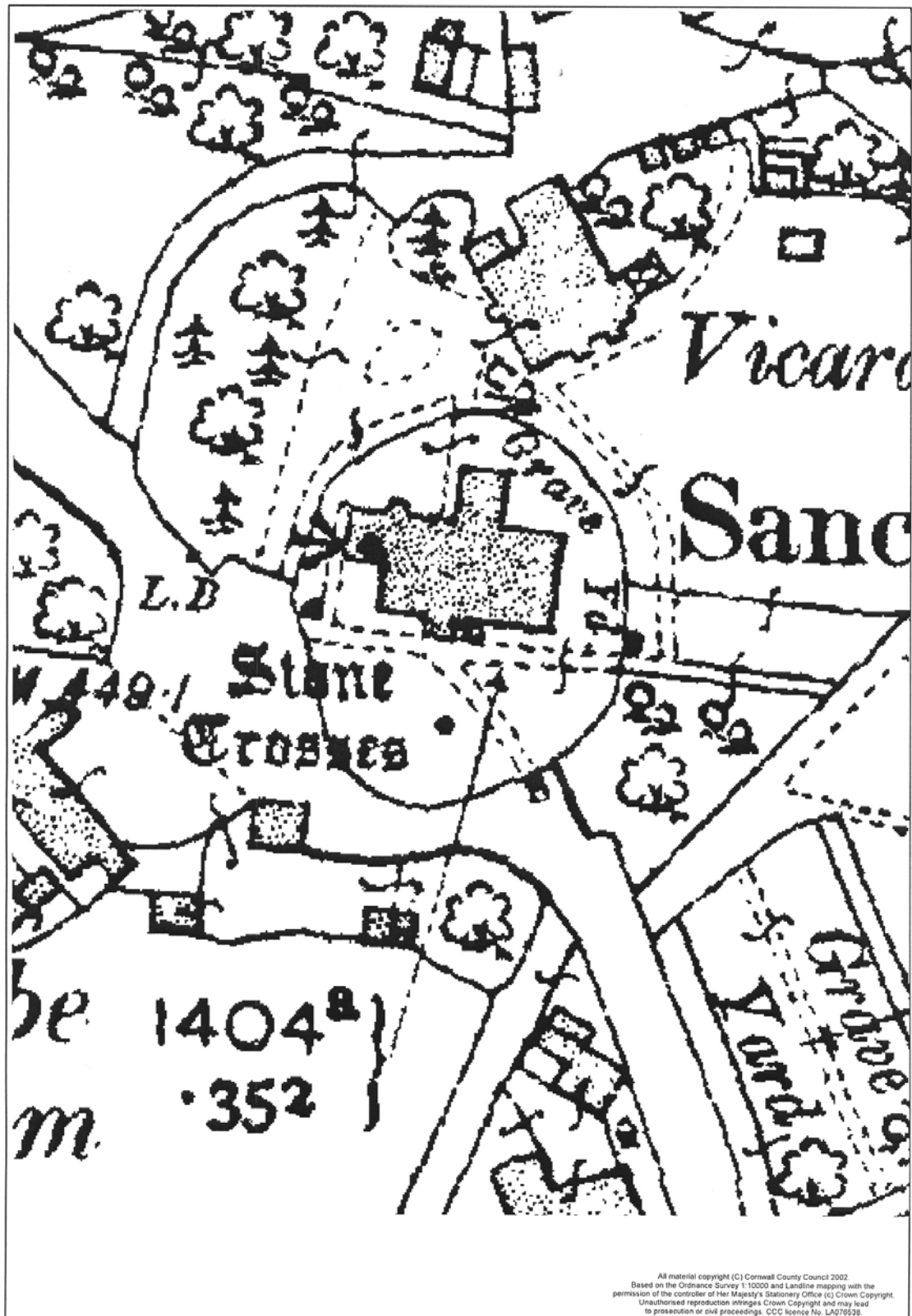


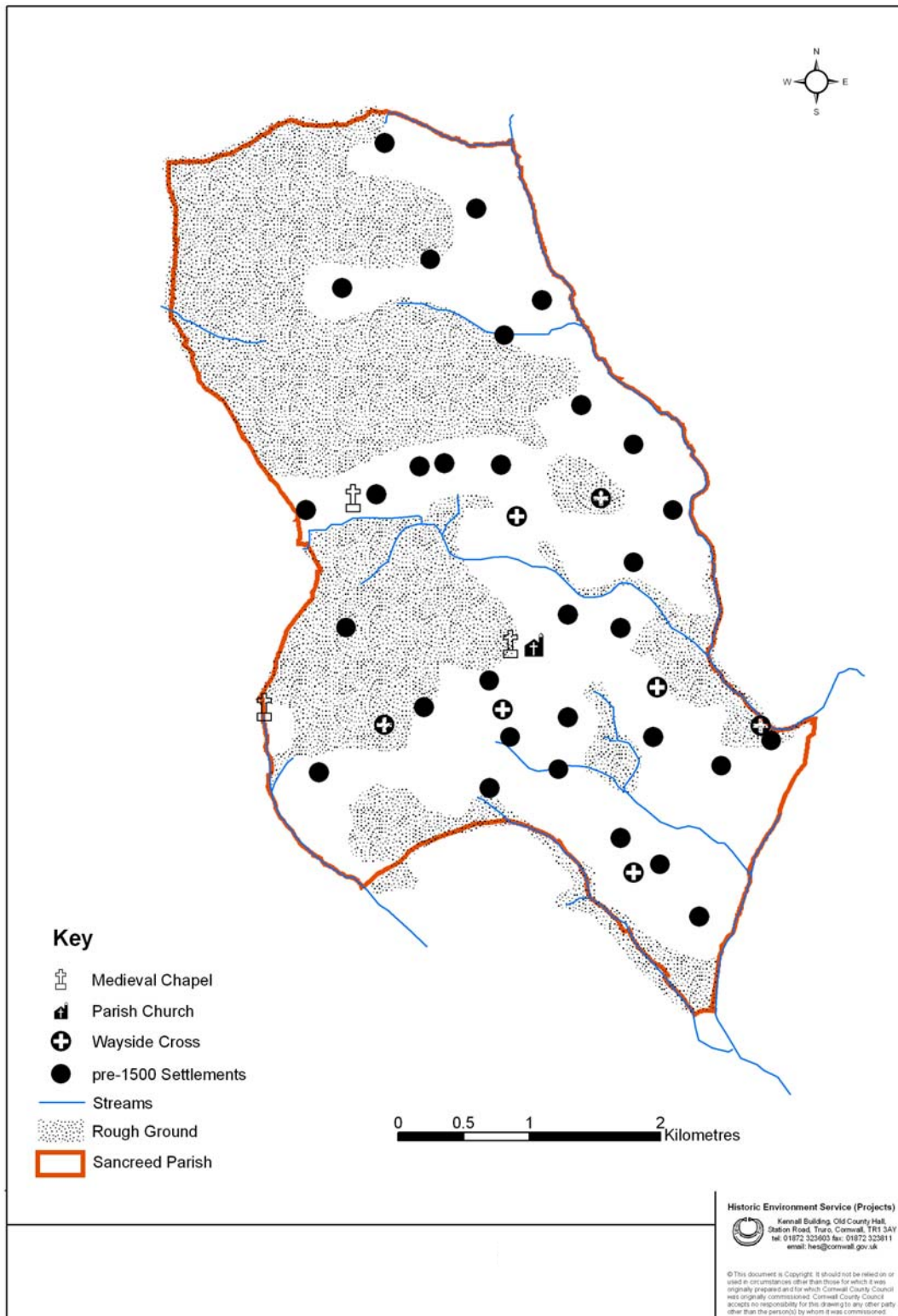
Fig 2 Ordnance Survey digital mapping showing the site and its environs (2003)



*Fig 3 First Edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, 1880*

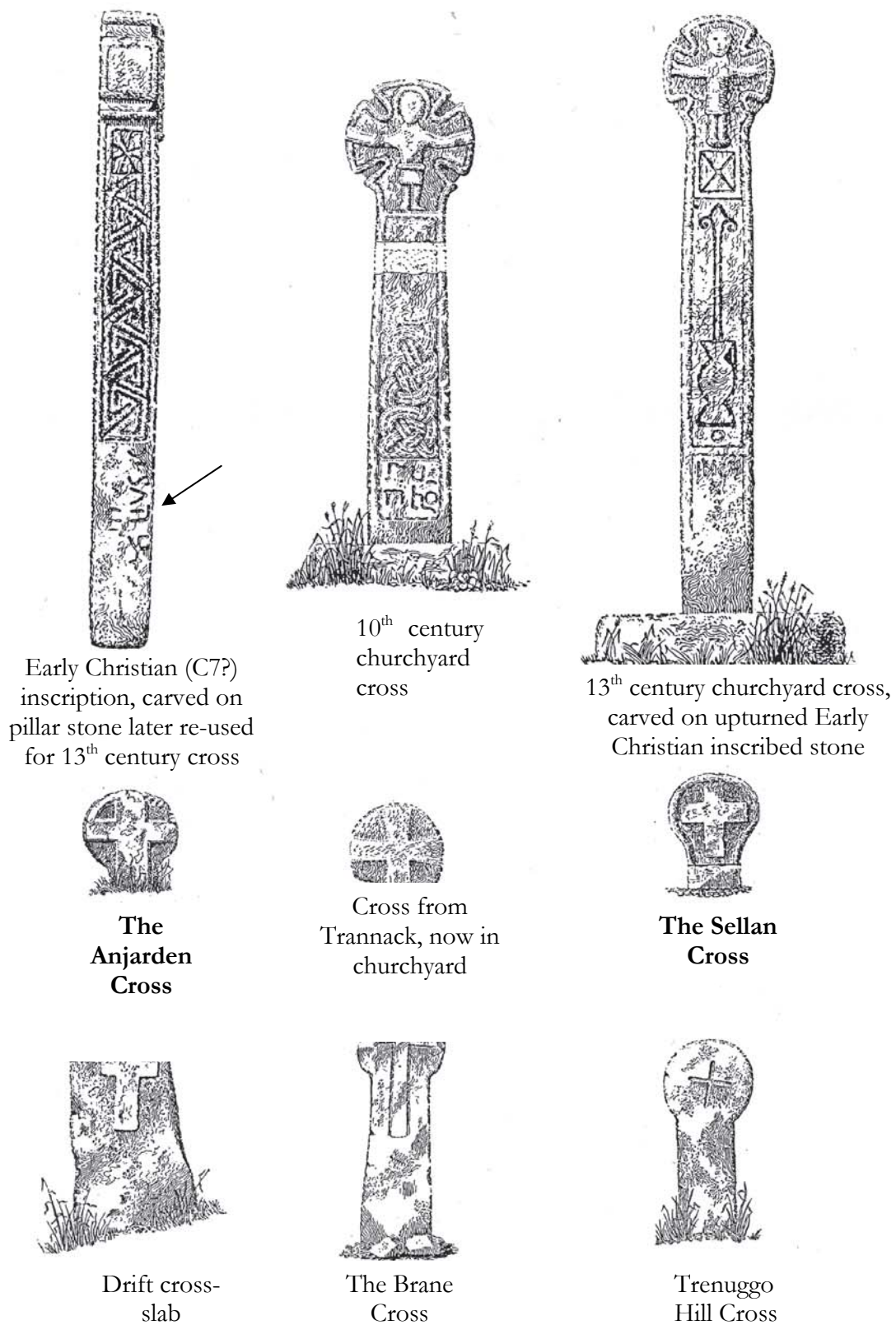


*Fig 4 Second Edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, 1907*



*Fig 5 Medieval settlement, topography and ecclesiastical sites in the parish of Sancreed*





*Fig 6 Early medieval and medieval monuments in Sancreed parish*



*Fig 7 The Anjarden Cross before conservation*



*Fig 8 The Sellan Cross before conservation*





*Fig 9 Rusting door hanging in the porch of Sancreed church*





*Fig 10 The Anjarden Cross: restoration work in progress – installing the new base*



*Fig 11 The Sellan Cross; restoration work in progress – mortaring the joint in the shaft*



*Fig 12 The Anjarden Cross: restoration complete (above, from the churchyard and below, from the road)*



*Fig 13 The Sellan Cross: restoration work complete (the cross is at the centre in the top picture)*