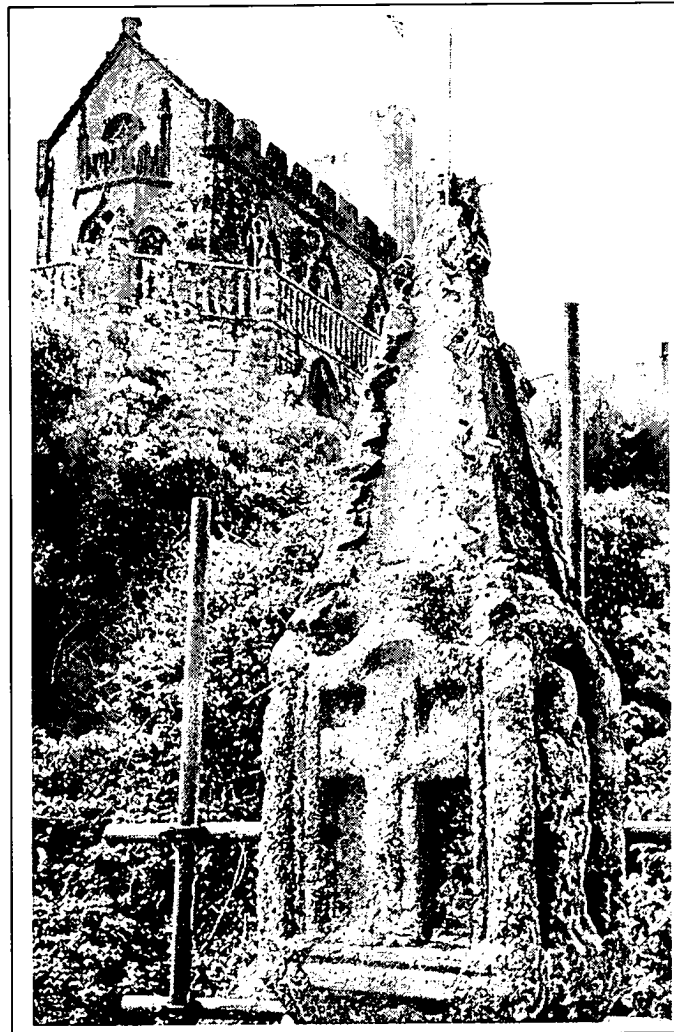


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# St Michael's Mount, Cornwall

## Conservation and recording of lantern crosses



**Cornwall Archaeological Unit**

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St Michael's Mount  
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Conservation and recording of lantern crosses



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At CAU, the report was typed by Katie Sykes and edited by Peter Rose.

### **Cover illustration**

The lantern cross in the garden, with the castle behind

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## Abbreviations

CAU	Cornwall Archaeological Unit
NGR	National Grid Reference
HER	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record

## Summary

The collection of medieval crosses on St Michael's Mount includes two fine late medieval lantern cross-heads. One, set up on the balustrade outside the chapel, is believed to be from the Mount originally. The other, set on a tall shaft above a precipice in the gardens, and embellished with 'Roman Cement' rosettes and a pinnacle, is said to have been brought to the Mount from Sinns Barton in Redruth between 1823 and 1831. The chapel lantern cross, located at SW 51442 29846 is number 29190 in the Historic Environment Record. The other, located at SW 51493 29880, is a Scheduled Monument, Cornwall number 176, and is Historic Environment Record number 18040.

The need for conservation work to the latter was first noted by Peter Herring of Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) in 1993. This work, eventually carried out by Sue and Lawrence Kelland in May 2002, involved stabilisation of the eroding 'Roman Cement' pinnacle, removal of lichen from the carved faces, and re-pointing the granite base. Work to the lantern cross outside the chapel, carried out at the same time, involved the filling of a number of cracks in the monument. At the same time, the opportunity was taken to make a full record of the sculptured faces of the two monuments, the cross in the garden having *never* been recorded before, other than in the most general terms. Carved faces on this cross were found to include the Crucifixion, Virgin Mary and Child, a Bishop, and an unknown saint; carved faces on the chapel lantern cross included the Crucifixion, the Virgin Mary and Child, a monk and a King: possibly Edward the Confessor, alleged founder of the monastery on the Mount. Although both were carved at about the same time, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the differences between the two resulting from their execution in two different types of stone (elvan and greenstone) are remarkable.

One striking revelation concerning the lantern cross outside the chapel was the fact that it had been severely damaged at some time between 1937 and 1949, probably as a result of a fall from the balustrade.

The principal recommendation arising from this work is the need to monitor the condition of the lantern cross outside the chapel. Many cracks, arising from the 20<sup>th</sup> century damage, will always be vulnerable to erosion. Although the lichen on the lantern cross in the garden will inevitable re-grow, it is *not* recommended that this is regularly removed. The purpose of removing the lichen on this occasion was to allow recording of the faces.

## 1. Introduction

St Michael's Mount requires no introduction. The conical granite islet crowned by the rugged buildings of monastery and castle, and home to the St Aubyn family since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, is a familiar image. Less well-known is the collection of five medieval crosses which embellish this remarkable landscape (Figs 2 – 3). These include two granite wheel-headed crosses, an octagonal cross-shaft set on a square stepped base, and two fine late medieval lantern cross-heads.

The need for conservation work to the two lantern crosses was first highlighted by Peter Herring of CAU in his 1993 archaeological evaluation of St Michael's Mount (1993, 73-4, 77-8). Following on from this, visits to inspect the problems were made with Pete Herring, representatives of the National Trust, and conservators Sue and Lawrence Kelland, and proposals for conservation work were first produced in 1997 (Kelland 1997). However, it was five years before the work was finally undertaken. This report describes the recording and repair work, which was carried out in April 2002 by Sue and Lawrence Kelland with help from Andrew Langdon, and with practical support and organisation from Nigel Burnett.

Although the work to the two crosses was carried out simultaneously, they are described separately below because they are different monuments, with individual histories and completely contrasting management needs.

## 2. Lantern cross-head outside the church

### 2.1 Introduction

This well preserved lantern cross-head is set on the balustrade immediately outside the north door of the church where it is seen, if not noticed, by all visitors. It is finely carved in a dark igneous stone, possibly from Catacleuse near Padstow. The ornate pinnacles probably date to a 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration (Herring, 1993, 73-4) but the figures beneath the four canopied niches are original medieval work.

### 2.2 History of the lantern cross-head

The excellent preservation of the carving on this cross suggests that it has spent much of its life indoors: probably in the church and perhaps in the Lady Chapel. As one face of the cross depicts the Virgin and Child, the Lady Chapel would seem to have been a fitting place for the display of this delicate piece. New-built in 1478, but on the site of an earlier 'chapel of blessed Marie', the Lady Chapel, with the church, fell into neglect at the Reformation (Herring, 1993, 72), and when William Borlase visited the Mount in 1731 he found '*the chough and crows in full possession waiting upon the Carcass of this forsaken structure*', the roof '*lately fallen and the walls crack'd in so may places*' while '*carv'd beams and broken timbers and fallen rubbish*' littered the floor. Borlase does not mention the cross although it might well have been amongst the '*several carv'd fragments of grey marble*' which he trod over in the Lady Chapel (Herring 1993, 189).

Both Church and Lady Chapel were restored in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Lady Chapel being converted into the Blue Drawing Rooms, and it is possible that the cross-head came to light at this time, although Borlase does not mention it on his return to the Mount in 1762.

In fact, the first known record of this lantern cross-head is by Blight (1856, 51) who may have noticed it because by then it had been prominently set on the balustrade outside the chapel, which was constructed in 1826 (Herring 1993, 89). The placing of the lantern cross on the balustrade also seems a likely context for the embellishment of the head with ornate pinnacles and tiny crosses, for these are certainly present in Blight's drawing of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (see the frontispiece).

An aspect of the history of this lantern cross which has only emerged recently is the fact that it has been severely damaged, and restored, and then moved again, within the last hundred years. The changes are summarised in Fig 4 . Blight produced several drawings of this cross-head, one of which was published in his book *Ancient Crosses and Antiquities of West Cornwall* in 1856 and others which are preserved in his sketch books (undated) at the Morrab Library in Penzance. When first recorded by Blight the cross-head was aligned with the Crucifixion scene facing north, the face with the Virgin Mary and Child facing south, the monk facing east and the King west. Photographic evidence suggests that the cross-head remained intact and in a good state of preservation until at least 1937 (Mee, 1937, 241). But by 1949, it is clear that the monument had received considerable damage and had again been restored. A postcard reproduced in Herring's *Archaeological Evaluation of St Michael's Mount* (1993, 73) shows that by this date, all of the small crosses on the pinnacles and the on the central finial had been replaced with bud-like terminations. Only one of the crosses from the Victorian restoration survived and that was the one which had been placed centrally above the canopied arch of the Crucifixion panel. In this postcard, the orientation of the cross remained as it had been in Blight's day.



A photo taken by Mary Henderson (now in Andrew Langdon's possession) shows that the cross-head stayed in the same alignment until at least 1954, but that by 1987 (the occasion of a visit by one of the authors), or perhaps considerably earlier, it had been turned through 180 degrees so that the figure of the Crucifixion faced south towards the chapel. As well as this, the octagonal shaft, which had been incorporated into the balustrade, was slightly shortened and a new granite octagonal support pieced into the top of the balustrade rail, probably to give additional support to the monument. The cushion-like support of the cross-head is now fixed directly onto this new piece of stone. It is not known when the cross-head was re-aligned in this way, or whether it had fallen a second time between 1954 and 1987. The fact that a new granite plinth was added at this time may suggest the monument had suffered a further accident, or had become unstable.

Although it is not immediately obvious, there is, on close inspection, plenty of evidence of damage to the monument. This includes cracks in the cushion-like support, replacement of the complete buttress or column between the canopied figures of the King and the Virgin Mary and Child, as well as the removal of the decorative rosettes below the collar on the octagonal shaft. It is now difficult to know whether all this damage was sustained when the cross was damaged on the first occasion, between 1937 and 1949, or whether some was associated with the realignment between 1954 and 1987.

### **2.3 Condition of the monument prior to conservation**

The problems of this cross-head relate directly to its history, described in the previous section. Most of the joints resulting from the 20<sup>th</sup> century damage remain stable, with the repairs holding well, but in some of the cracks, particularly on the more exposed top of the head, the filling had started to erode, exposing the broken edges. There was also a small area of decay on the canopy above the Virgin Mary.

Much of the surface of the cross-head is covered by a thick orangey-brown lichen; but this is considered to be protecting the stone, not harming it.

### **2.4 Conservation Work**

The conservation work was undertaken by Sue Kelland on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2002 (Fig 5). This involved the following:

- Any eroding cracks were raked out
- The cracks were filled with hydraulic lime: sand mortar, coloured to blend with the stone
- The small area of decay above the Virgin was also repaired
- Cleaning was avoided, except where it was needed around the cracks, to allow the mortar to adhere.

### **2.5 Recording**

The conservation work to the cross-head was recorded with notes and photographs by Sue Kelland (Kelland 2002). In addition, the opportunity was taken to record the cross in detail, with photos (black and white and colour), notes and sketches. The results are recorded below:

### 2.5.1 Description of the lantern cross-head outside the chapel (Fig xx).

The cross-head which visitors view today, on the balustrade of the steps leading into the church, is very different to that which was discovered during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As previously described, the monument has been reconstructed on at least two occasions and although the main body of the monument is original, there has also been a great deal of modern decoration added. The restoration work is a credit to the craftsmen involved, and it takes a keen eye to identify where new work has been added to old.

The lantern-shaped cross-head is cut from one single piece of igneous rock, which appears to be Catacluse greenstone from the well known coastal quarry near St Merryn, although confirming this would not be possible without removing a thin section for microscopic examination.

The cross-head and its supporting cushion-like support, are carved from one piece of stone. Each of its four faces display ogee arched canopies supported on square-section pillars at the four corners of the head. Rising from the apex of the canopied arches is a central finial, while a crocketed pinnacle surmounts each of the four corners. The four corner pillars are free-standing, the stone behind cut away to form a central octagonal shaft, against which the figures are supported. The octagonal shaft terminates in a central pinnacle. The cushion-like support of the lantern-head is basically plain, being elaborated only by two horizontal incised lines.

Beneath the cusped ogee arches on each of the four faces of the lantern-head are figures in niches. Each of the figures is sensitively carved, with great attention to detail, particularly in the way the folds and drapes of the garments are rendered. In this respect, the gentle flow of the cloth over Mary's knees should be particularly noted. Compared to this, the over-large faces with their bulging eyes, long noses and tiny mouths, seem simple, stylised and ill-proportioned, though nonetheless moving, while the arms and hands are absurdly small.

On what is now the south face of the cross-head is carved the Crucifixion scene with a figure of Christ on the cross and two attendant figures, one each side, presumed to be Mary and St John. Christ is depicted with arms outstretched and head upright, in a stance which is more reminiscent of the depictions of Christ on earlier medieval Cornish crosses (ie 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century, for example the Mount Cross – Fig 3) than of the typical late medieval rendering where Christ hangs on the cross in agony: head leaning, arms stretched up, legs bent. The misery in Christ's over-large face is emphasised by his long pointed beard, heavy brow, and large eyes. Compared to this, his bare arms and legs are thin and emaciated and on his body, the ribs are protruding above the folds of the loin-cloth. On Christ's right is a female figure (Mary) with hands held together in front. Details of her face have worn away, but her garments can still be clearly seen. She wears a long gown, which extends to her ankles, with an additional over-garment across her shoulders. The figure on Christ's left (St John) has a rather larger face with discernible facial features. He also stands with hands together. His elegantly-flowing robes fall to the ground, hiding his feet.

The reverse face (now facing north) displays the Virgin Mary and Child. Mary is shown seated on a bench and appears to be gently smiling. The infant Christ, remarkably well-proportioned for a carving of this period, is cradled in Mary's left arm, while her right arm reaches towards him. He wears a long robe, from which his ankles and feet poke out. Mary wears a head-dress, a long flowing dress which covers her feet, and an over-garment whose fine carved detail includes lapels.

The western face shows a figure of an ecclesiastic, with a particularly large head in proportion to his body. He wears a simple skullcap and is clean-shaven. The simple features of his face appear appropriately austere. Beneath a cope, he wears a long, flowing, sleeved robe with possibly, a dangling tasselled cord. In his right hand he holds a staff, while in his left hand he

holds a small-unidentified object, possibly a book. This ecclesiastic may perhaps represent one of the former Priors of the Mount.

Under the eastern canopy is displayed a king, reputed to be Edward the Confessor, who is said to have founded the monastery on the Mount in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (St Aubyn guide, chapter on 'Early history of the priory', Taylor 1916, 145 – 7). His simply carved and serious face is crowned, and encircled by stiff spiky hair and a beard. He wears a long robe, tied at the waist, and a cloak over his shoulders. In his left hand he holds a staff and in his right, a small square object, possibly a book (or a box, or even his charter?).

### 3. Lantern cross-head in the garden

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the private gardens to the east of the church is this tall lantern cross, set up here before 1831. Standing high on a rocky outcrop, the cross forms a deliberate sky-line feature in many 19<sup>th</sup> century depictions of the Mount (eg. Fig 8) although its impact nowadays has been lost because of the growth of a tall pine tree, which obscures views from the North.

Only the lantern-head is old. This is said to have been brought from Sinns Barton, near Redruth, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. When set up on the Mount, the head was mounted on a granite shaft, which allegedly once stood on the causeway as a marker (Herring, 1993,77), and a modern base. And, perhaps because this was the time when the north terrace and Lady Chapel (Blue Drawing Rooms) were being embellished with Roman Cement mouldings (Herring, 1993, 72, 78, 89), the cross too was decorated with an ornate orangey-brown pinnacle, floral mouldings and rosettes, the whole supported by copper rods – originally hidden, but now exposed by erosion.

#### 3.2 History of the lantern cross-head

The cross-head was believed by Charles Henderson (1960, 424) to have been brought to St Michael's Mount from Sinns Barton in Redruth parish. However, the present authors believe this attribution to be based on an error in the notoriously inaccurate Polsue (1872, 118), who stated that 'on the barton is an ancient cross, said to mark the site of a chapel dedicated to *All Saints*'. There is in fact no other reference to such a stone at Sinns Barton, and although there is a cross-base there, this cross-base is not of the type that one would expect to have supported a lantern cross. A more promising candidate is 'the mitred stone in Redruth', measured by William Borlase in 1751 – 58 (*Excursions*, MS at the Royal Institution of Cornwall Library, but quoted by Tangye 1988, 17), but unfortunately, Borlase does not specify exactly where this stone was located. At any rate, our stone may well have come from somewhere in Redruth parish, for it is said to have been given to Edward St Aubyn by the Rev HM St Aubyn, who was rector of Redruth from 1821 to 1833 (Herring 1993, 77). Perhaps the most likely place of origin is the parish church (dedicated to St Euny) or St Rumon's Chapel in the town of Redruth.

Various strands of evidence combine to indicate the date at which it was set up on the Mount in its present position:

- As noted above, the cross was apparently given to Edward St Aubyn of St Michael's Mount, later Sir Edward, by the Rev HM St Aubyn. He was rector of Redruth between 1821 and 1833, at which time he may have been able to somehow acquire the cross-head for the Mount.
- Thomas (1831,16) in the 3rd edition of his guide, *Ancient and Modern History of Mount's Bay* notes what appears to be the cross. He writes, '*The ascent to the summit of the Mount at present is by a steep and rugged passage fronting the north, on ascending which, the*

visitor will perceive a small, but handsome column of granite, decorated with figures of saints, &c., in basso-relievo'. Yet the reference to the monument does not appear in Thomas's 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, which was published in 1823. This therefore suggests that the cross appeared on the Mount between 1823 and 1831.

- Herring notes that the Roman cement which adorns the exterior of the Blue Drawing Rooms (formerly the Lady Chapel) and the mock Gothic arches below the North Terrace was commissioned in 1826. As the embellishments to the cross-head are of the same material (Trevor Proudfoot, Cliveden Conservation Workshop, *pers comm* to Sue Kelland), it seems likely that these were done at about the same time. The date for its erection is thereby narrowed, to sometime between 1826 and 1831.
- By 1846 the cross was certainly in position: it can be seen in silhouette on an engraving of Queen Victoria's visit to the Mount in 1846 (Herring 1993, 77).

### 3.3 Condition of the monument prior to conservation

Three problems affected this monument:

- The main problem was caused by the breakdown of the Roman Cement, as frequently happens with this material. In this case, it was the finer mix, used for the decorative detail, which was decaying. Many of the crockets were missing, exposing copper nails; some of the applied rosettes were loose and the areas of finer mix were separating away where they joined the coarser mix used for the basic work. Areas which remained were heavily cracked (Kelland 2002).
- All pointing was missing from the base of four rectangular blocks (although the monument appeared nonetheless stable).
- A thick, hairy green lichen growing all over the cross, but particularly on the head, obscured all detail of the carving (Fig 9).

Before conservation work took place, there was debate about whether the eroding Roman Cement pinnacle should be fully restored, entirely disposed of, or simply stabilised. Opinion was divided, with most people disliking it for its colour and style (which is not appropriate to a medieval lantern cross) but acknowledging that it has significance as a part of the history of the monument and the Mount. In the event, the middle course was chosen, and it was decided that the modern additions should simply be stabilised to preserve them, but not rebuilt.

### 3.2 The Conservation Work (Fig 12)

- The long hairy lichen was removed with a small spatula, from the medieval cross-head only, to reveal the carving. The purpose of this was to allow photography and description of the hitherto unrecorded sculpture. A lower-growing dense layer of lichen close to the stone was left.
- The Roman Cement areas were consolidated by injecting a dilute Paraloid B72 acrylic resin solution into the cracks.
- Following this, the cracks were repaired with a hydraulic lime mortar, coloured to match the Roman Cement.
- The joints of the base stones were raked out and re-pointed in a hydraulic lime mortar, packed with small stone.

(Kelland 2002).

### 3.2 Recording

The conservation work to the lantern cross was recorded by Sue Kelland (Kelland 2002), her report being supplemented with further notes, sketches and photographs by Andrew Langdon. This cross has never been properly recorded before because of the thick lichen and because it is so inaccessible, so a particularly important element of the work was the acquisition of a good record of the sculpture. All faces of the lantern cross were therefore recorded with archive-

standard black and white film, colour slides and colour prints and the following full description made.

### 3.2.1. Description of the lantern cross in the garden (Figs 10 and 11)

This cross consists of four parts: the cross-head with a cushion-like support, a modern granite cross-shaft, base-stone made up of granite blocks and a Roman Cement finial. Of these only the cross-head and cushion-like support are original. The latter are carved from a single piece of stone, which may be an elvan: a compact, hard, fine-grained and quartz-rich igneous rock, from a granite dyke (Alan Bromley *pers comm*). Compared with the lantern cross outside the chapel, all of the carving is very simple and crude, perhaps because of the difficulty of working such a hard stone, although it is possible that additional detail may have been added by painting.

On each of the four faces of the lantern head is a single figure, carved in relatively low relief, and set within a canopied niche. One of the scenes depicts the Crucifixion and another the Virgin and Child; the third is a bishop, while the fourth is at present unidentified, but may be a local saint.

The principal eastern face of the cross-head displays a simple version of the Crucifixion, with Christ on the cross, possibly wearing a crown. Again, Christ stands erect on the cross, although in this version his arms are slightly more raised than on the Chapel cross. The lower part of this face of the monument has been damaged and filled in with Roman cement.

On the western face is a figure of the Virgin Mary, crowned and possibly seated on a throne: behind her crowned head is a sculptured arc which could be part of an additional head garment, a halo, or the high back of a throne. She holds what is probably a sceptre in her left hand, and in her right, the crowned infant Jesus. Mary wears a long robe, from beneath which her tiny feet peep out.

The northern face displays a bishop, mitred and holding a staff or crosier with his left hand while holding up his right hand in benediction. This face of the monument is covered by a tough coating of fine grey lichen, which makes identification of detail difficult, although the bishop's chasuble and other vestments can be made out.

The south face displays a figure with long shoulder-length hair, carrying a round object (perhaps a basket?) in the left hand while holding up a torch or club in the right. The figure, which wears a full-length dress or gown with feet showing at the bottom, is probably a saint. It is not possible to say whether the figure is male or female.

Comparison with other lantern crosses suggests that this last figure might be a saint connected with the church or chapel for which the cross was originally carved. For example, a lantern cross now at St Neot but originally from a chapel of St James in the parish of St Kew has a figure of St James on it, identifiable from the fact that he carries a fuller's club. Another very worn and mutilated lantern cross at Newlyn East church appears to include a representation of that church's patron saint, who was beheaded (Henderson 1958, 364 and Newlyn East *Church Guide*). A figure on one side of the cross is clearly headless, but carries a large round lump, probably the severed head, under her arm. From the items it is carrying, the figure on our cross-head cannot be identified with any well-known international saint, and so is probably a local saint. If the cross is indeed from Redruth parish, then we could speculatively suggest that the saint is perhaps Euny or Rumon. But as no details of the lives of these saints are known, and as the exact origin of the cross remains uncertain, there is no way of being sure. What is likely, however, is that the scene, in which the saint carries a torch and a basket (?), reflects an element in the story of the unknown saint's life, which was so well-known in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, that it would have been easily recognisable to local people.

The canopied arches beneath which the figures are displayed are not symmetrical. The eastern face has a single central arch with two flat areas to either side, while the south and west faces have three arches, and the northern, just one large arch. The canopies are formed by cutting out or recessing the area around the images, bringing them into relief. A small (1 cm) hole cut through the canopy from the east to the north face, as well as one or two other partly cut holes, suggests that the sculptor may have been planning to cut away portions of the stone between the faces to produce a more three-dimensional effect similar to the lantern cross outside the chapel. Above the canopies, the terminations are also not symmetrical in design, making it uncertain what the original upper structure of the monument was like. Normally, the canopies would be symmetrical and continue upwards to form a central finial, with pinnacles on the corners, but here, the Victorian Roman Cement finial also masks any evidence of the upper structure from view.

The cushion-like support below the lantern head is an integral part of the monument. It has rectangular faces with chamfered corners, and on each of the four faces of the cushion is the outline of a shield in low relief (see endpiece). Upon each shield are three rows of chevrons, lightly incised, which appear to be a Coat of Arms. Originally, these lantern crosses would have been painted and perhaps even gilded, and it is possible that these outlines and faintly incised lines acted as a guide for the artist to paint the patron's arms on each face. At present, it has not been possible to identify these arms. The only Cornish family that appears to have had arms with three rows of chevrons is Rinsey (Romilly, 1870), but it is difficult to see why this family would have been involved. The arms of the Bassets of Tehidy are not dissimilar, with three wavy bands, and clearly this family would fit well as patrons of a cross from the Redruth area. Lake (1872, 137 and 149) describes the Rinsey arms as 'ar. 3 bars dancettee gu.' and the arms of the Bassets of Tehidy as 'ar. 3 bars wavy gu.'. Lake also describes the arms of Bassett (spelt with a double 't' and distinguished from the Bassets of Tehidy) as identical with that of Rinsey. Unfortunately, the writers' lack of armorial knowledge together with uncertainty about the origin and history of this cross preclude further comment for the time being.

Clearance of lichen from the cushion-like support revealed two holes, one on the south side and one on the north, each about one inch in diameter. Each hole had been drilled into the cushion at an angle and tapers inwards. Both holes had been filled up with Roman Cement. This cement was removed from the hole on the south side to establish whether it was a pour-hole for lead to set the central dowel (Kelland 2002, 4). This however appeared unlikely as the holes tapered to such an extent that any lead would have set before it reached the dowel-hole. After removing the cement, the Kellands also discovered that the holes were lined with natural resin mastic of a type used in the Middle Ages. They therefore suggested that these holes may have been used to hold short wooden poles, for instance for hanging small flags with additional heraldic shields (Kelland 2002, 4).

The Roman Cement finial was moulded onto the top of the granite cross-head around a central copper rod and armatures. The main body of the finial was made up with a coarse-grained aggregate; on top of this a finer coating of cement was applied and finished with separately attached and presumably pre-formed crockets.

The tall modern octagonal granite shaft measures 2.44m (8ft) high. It is not known how the cross-head is fixed to the shaft, although one would assume that this is by means of an iron dowel. The joint between the bottom of the cushion support and the octagonal shaft is masked by a thick band of Roman cement adorned with rosette motifs of the same material, below which are more rosettes, attached to each of the sides of the octagonal shaft. The cross-shaft is tapering and has trefoil stops at the bottom. It is supported by a granite base-stone, made up of rectangular blocks of granite.

## 4 Overall Conclusion and Recommendations

The conservation work described should be regarded as routine maintenance, necessitated by the fact that both crosses stand outdoors in exposed locations. It is not considered that they need to be indoors, but they should both be regularly inspected for signs of deterioration. In particular:

- The crack in the lantern cross outside the chapel should be checked for any signs of erosion.
- For the long term, consideration could be given to moving the chapel lantern cross indoors, where it would be protected from erosion – but only provided that it can be viewed from all sides and carefully lit to highlight the delicate carving.
- The Roman Cement additions to the lantern cross in the garden should be periodically examined to determine whether further stabilisation is necessary, although the recent work should protect it for many years
- The lichen should be allowed to grow back on the lantern cross in the garden and on both this and the cross outside the chapel there should be no regular cleaning or lichen removal. Although disfiguring, the lichen is considered to be protecting rather than damaging both crosses.

In addition, the following research is recommended:

- It would be of great benefit to have details of the method by which the lantern cross outside the chapel was restored in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In conclusion, it is interesting to compare the two monuments, and in so doing, to appreciate what has been learned about each stone.

To start with the obvious similarity: both are the heads of lantern crosses, which to judge from their mouldings and architectural detail, are probably of late 15<sup>th</sup> century date. The probable association of the chapel cross with the Lady Chapel on the Mount, which was 'new-built' in 1478 may help to refine this. Each has lost its original shaft and the pinnacles with which they would originally have been surmounted (as is the case with all other lantern heads in Cornwall), although both retain an unusual and unique feature in the cushion-like support beneath the head. Both were restored as ornamental features, within the same scheme of improvements on the Mount, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As both are lantern crosses, they share other features of this monument type. They both have figures beneath canopies, and in common with most lantern crosses, one face depicts the Crucifixion and another the Virgin. But at this point, the similarities end. In comparing the detail of the two pieces, the most striking difference is in the quality of their execution, arising primarily from the use of very different materials; and perhaps secondly from the fact that one was commissioned by a wealthy patron, while the other may have been carved for a local church or chapel, probably by a local mason or sculptor.

Compared to the Chapel cross, that believed to be from Redruth is extremely crude. Details may have been painted on but for the most part complex carving was simply not attempted, either because it was not within the sculptor's competence or because it was simply not possible in this stone. The crude appearance is *not* simply the result of weathering, because where it did exist, the detail can still be seen – for example in the crisp lines of the shields, in the neck-line of Mary's dress.

In comparison, the sculpture on the Chapel cross is delicate and detailed. But this is of Cataclouse Stone from the Padstow area, where the quarry was producing much high quality

sculpture in the late medieval period. Other examples of work of this period in Catacleuse Stone include the fonts at Padstow and St Merryn, the reredos at St Endellion and the lantern cross at St Mawgan. The Catacleuse Quarry was supplying stone for other ornamental work on the Mount in the late medieval period, notably the doorways and window frames for the Lady Chapel, and the lantern cross might even have been the crowning piece of this valuable contract. In this cross, we are looking at competent work, by a skilled craftsman, working in a sympathetic medium, rather than a crude copy by a local mason working in a fine-grained but extremely tough stone. The latter's achievement should not be underestimated, however, and no doubt it pleased those for whom it was carved, particularly as it included an image of their very own saint! And although the Chapel lantern cross must be regarded as amongst the finest pieces of late medieval sculpture in Cornwall, it is still clearly a Cornish product for, as noted previously, the style of the Crucifixion it depicts refers back to earlier Cornish models, not to contemporary English ones.

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## 6. Project archive

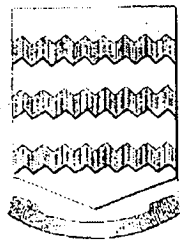
The CAU project number is ~~PR200310~~ 2002003

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

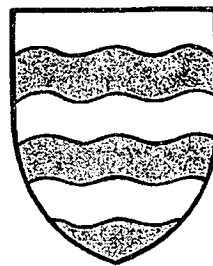
1. A project file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and colour prints.
2. Black and white photographs archived under the following index numbers: GBP 1477, 1 – 36; 1478, 1 – 36.



3. Colour slides archived under the following index numbers: GCS 33687 - 33693
4. This report held in digital form as G:\CAU\DOCUMENT\SITES\Sites S\St Michael's Mount Crosses\St Michael's Mount Cross Report



*Rimsay*



BASSET



*Sketch of the arms on the lantern cross from Redruth  
now in the gardens on St Michael's Mount*

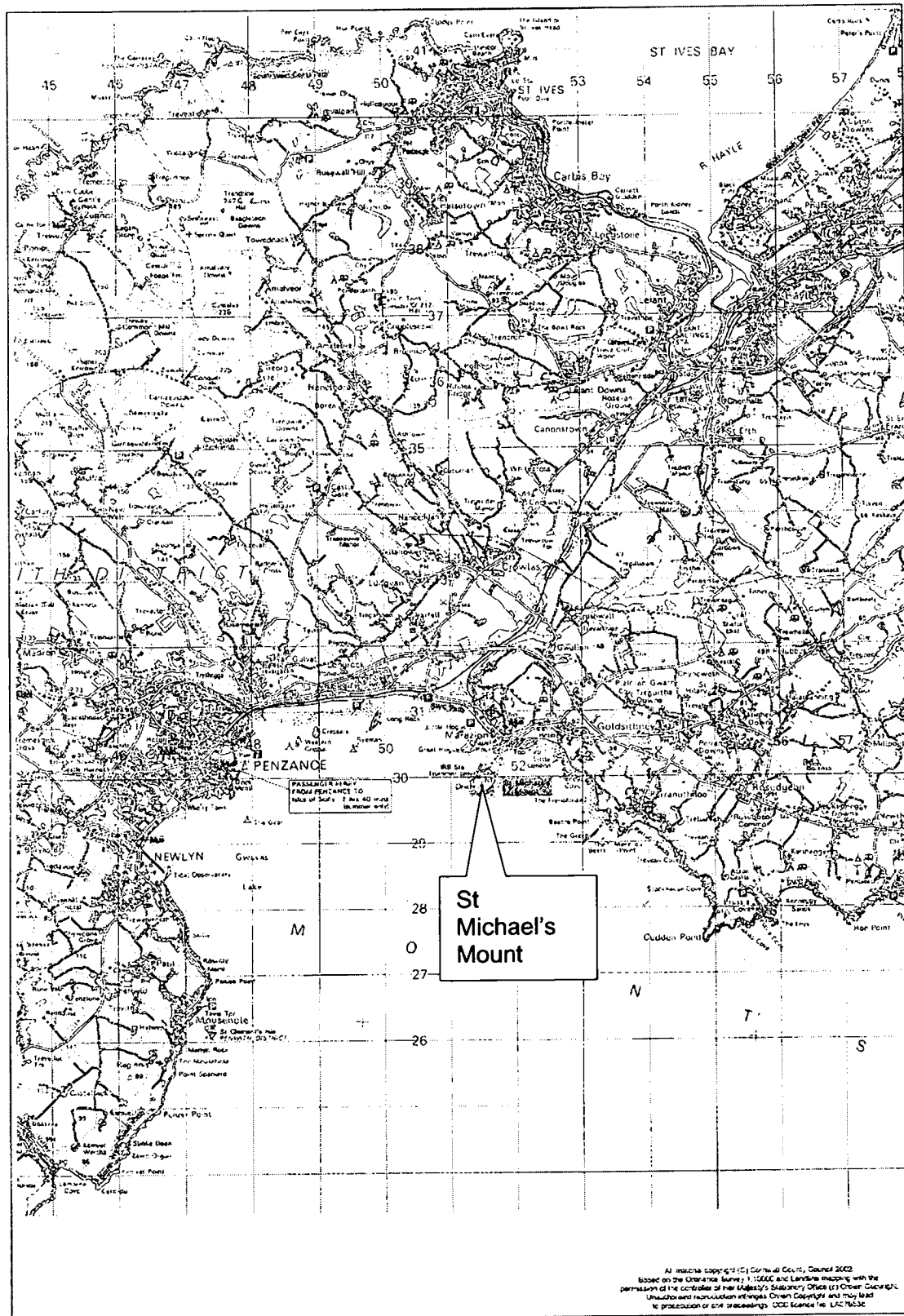
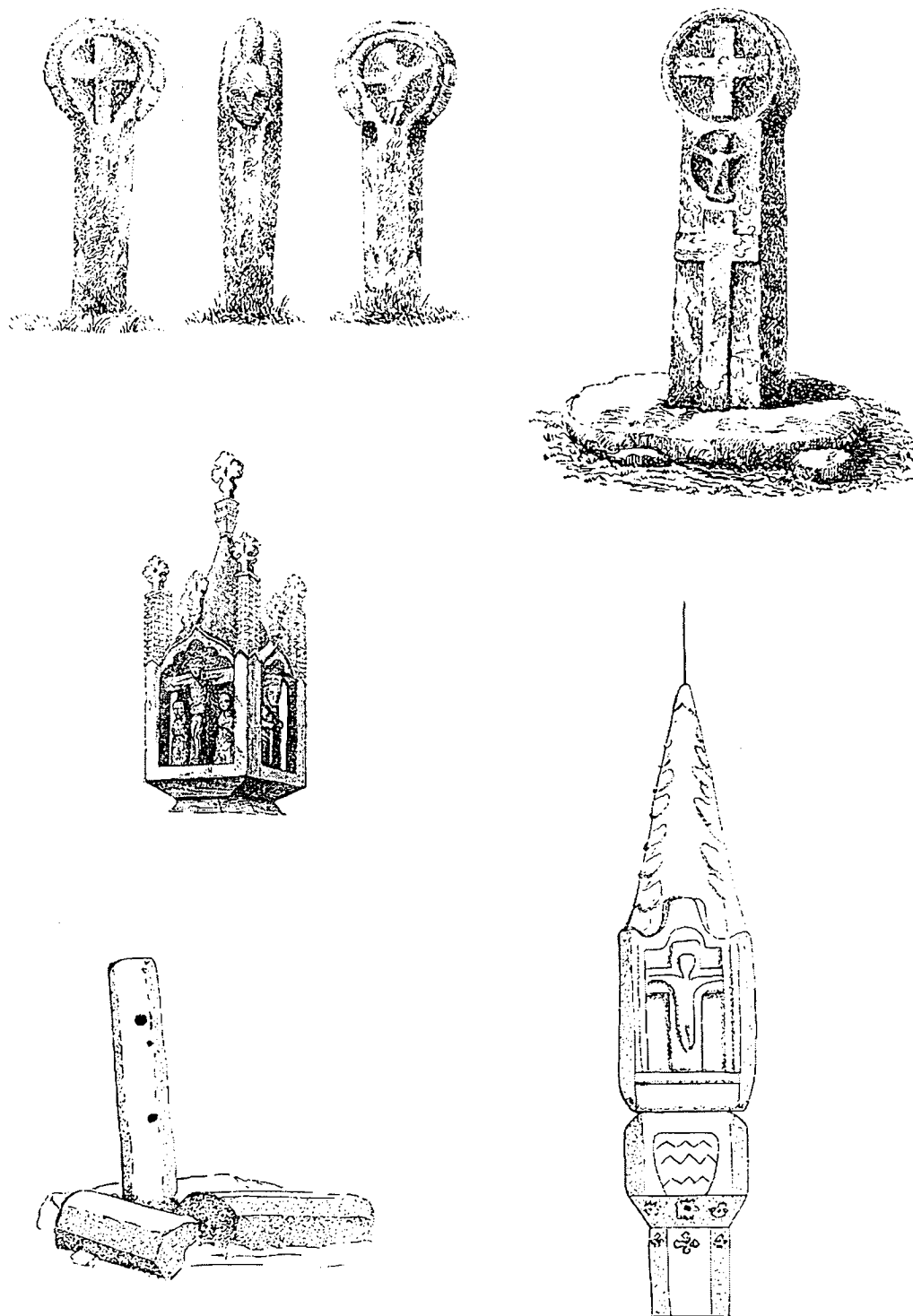
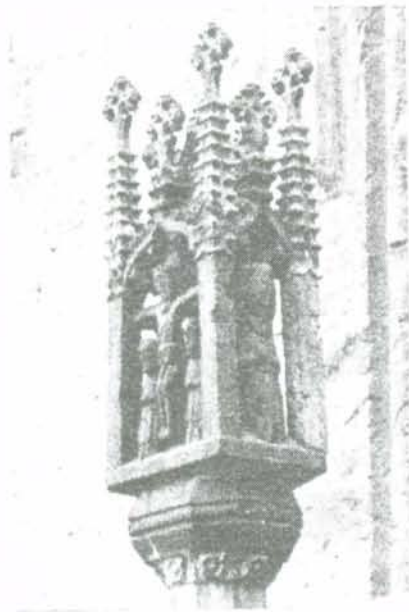


Fig 1. Location of St Michael's Mount





*Fig 3. Crosses on the Mount (cross from St Erth, the Mount Cross, the lantern cross outside the chapel, the cross shaft outside the western entrance and the Lantern cross in the garden).*



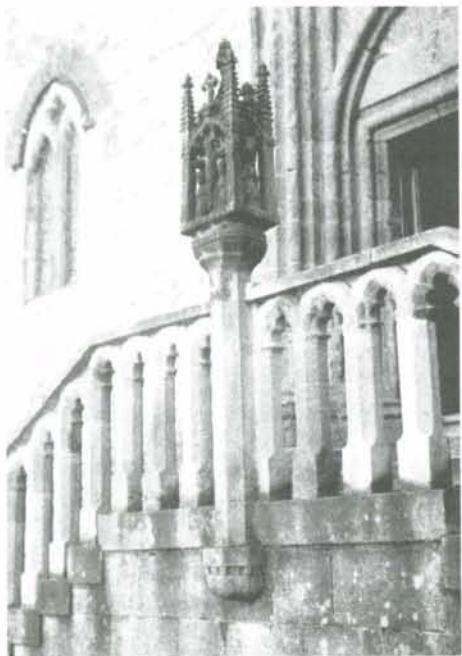
Lantern Cross

1930s



ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT LANTERN CROSS

1949 postcard

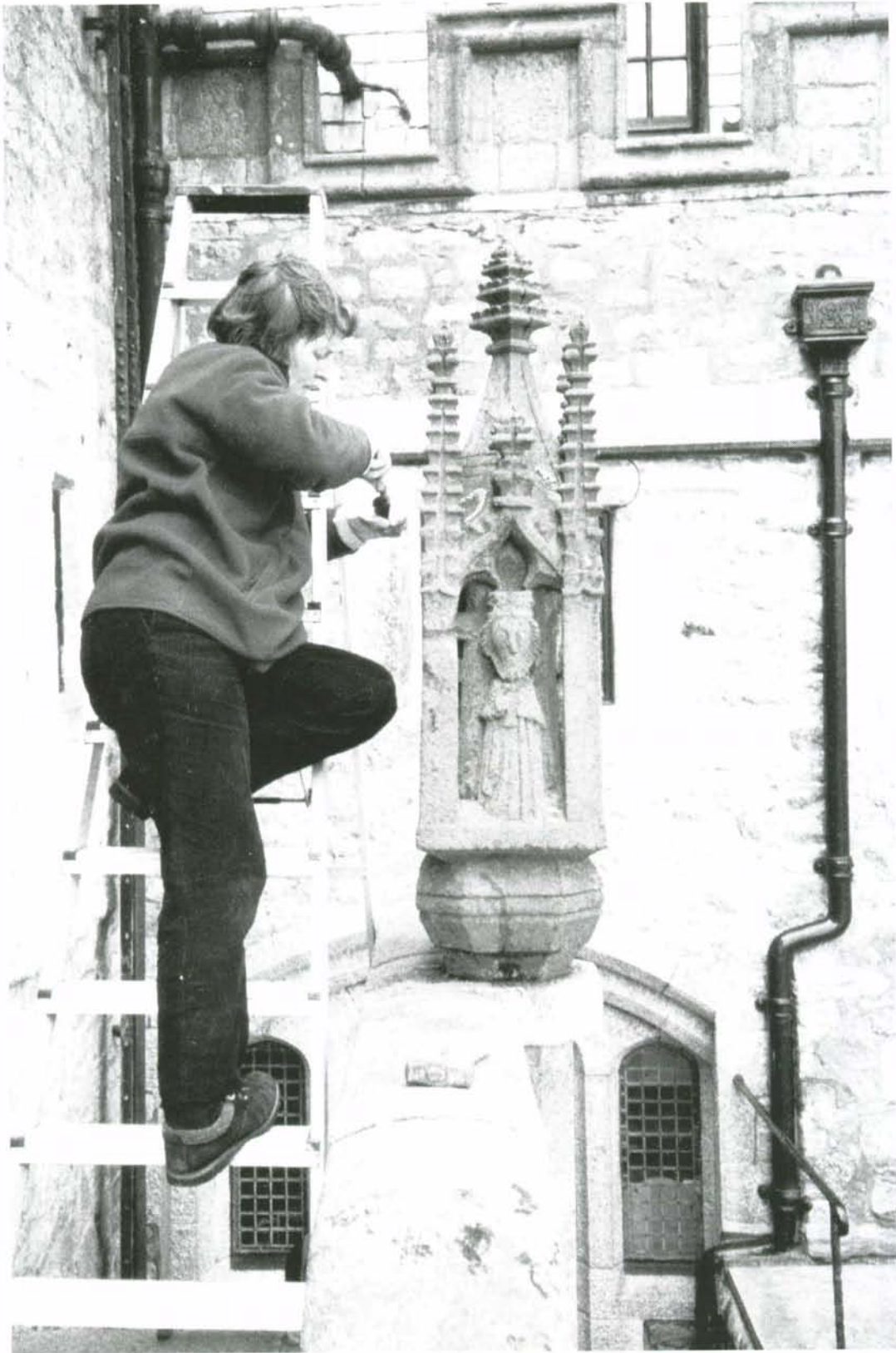


1950s



1990

Fig 4. The lantern cross outside the chapel: 20<sup>th</sup> century changes

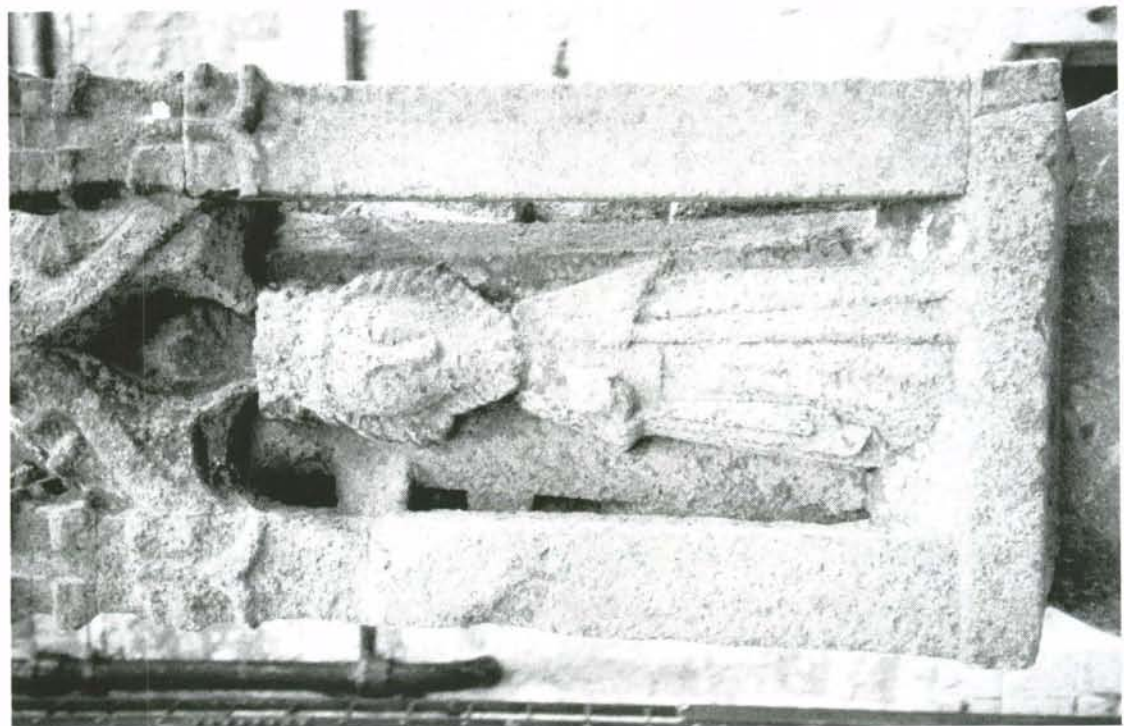


*Fig 5. Conservation work in progress: Sue Kelland repointing cracks in the pinnacle of the cross*



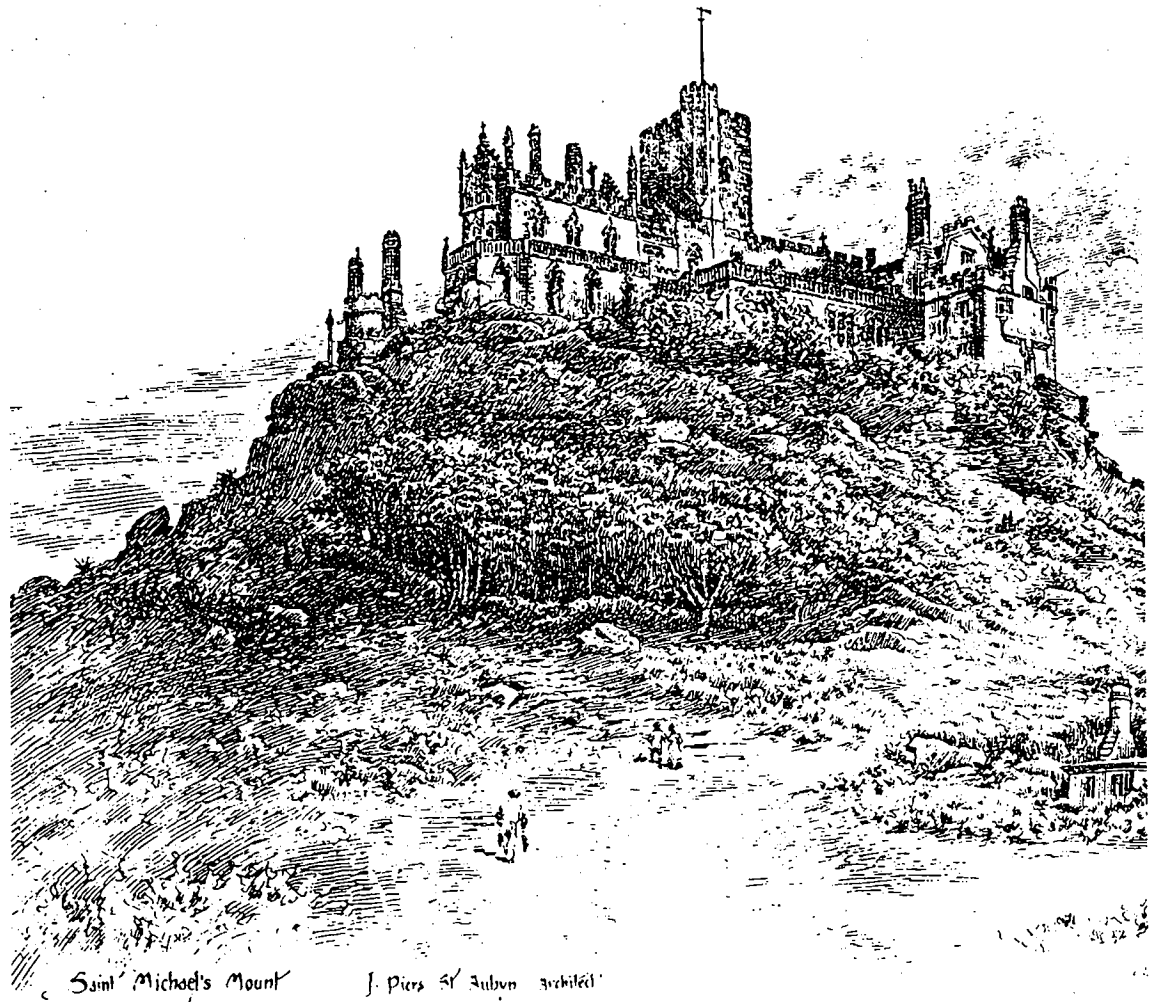


*Fig 6. The lantern cross outside the chapel (Mary and Child on left, Crucifixion on right)*



*Fig 7. The lantern cross outside the chapel (monk on left, and king on right)*

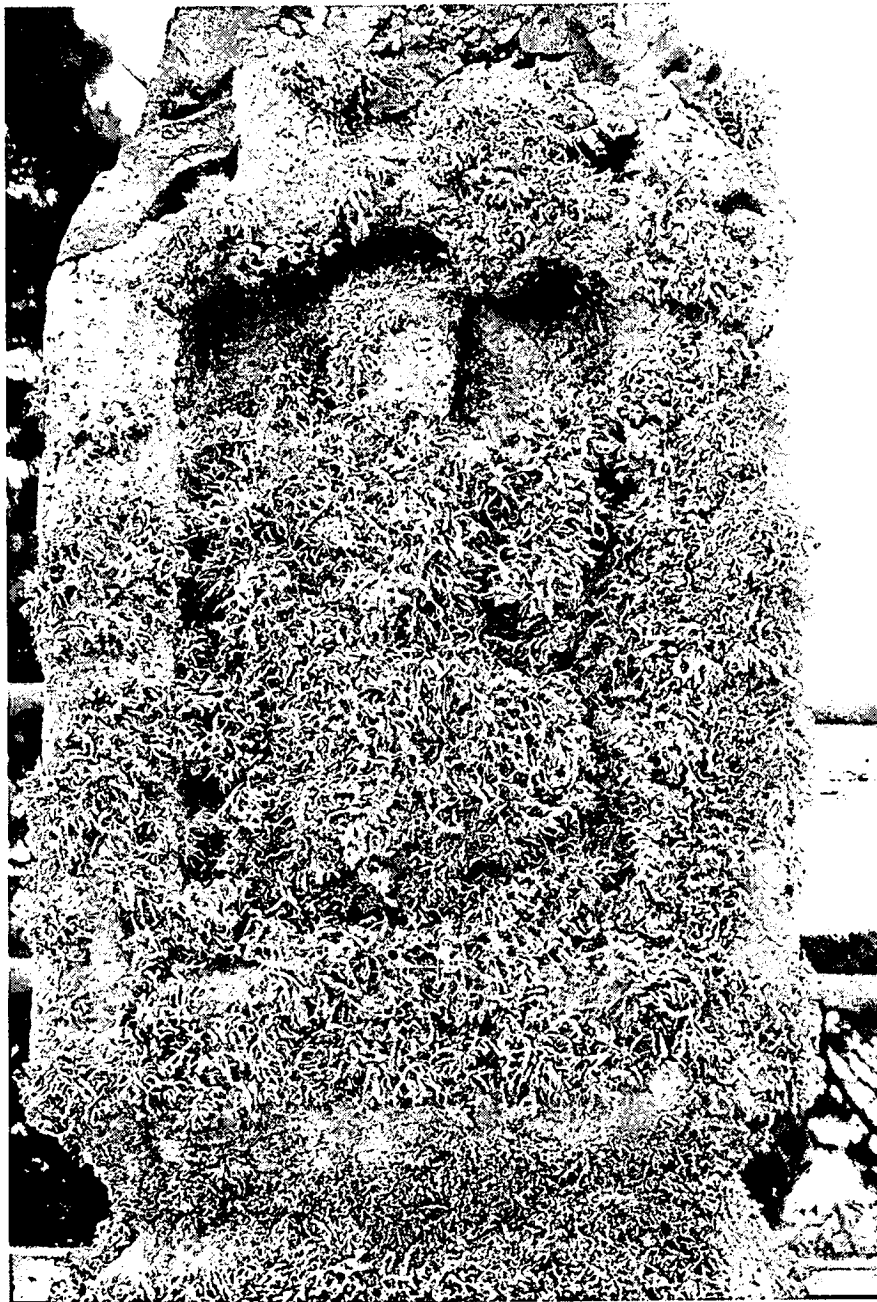




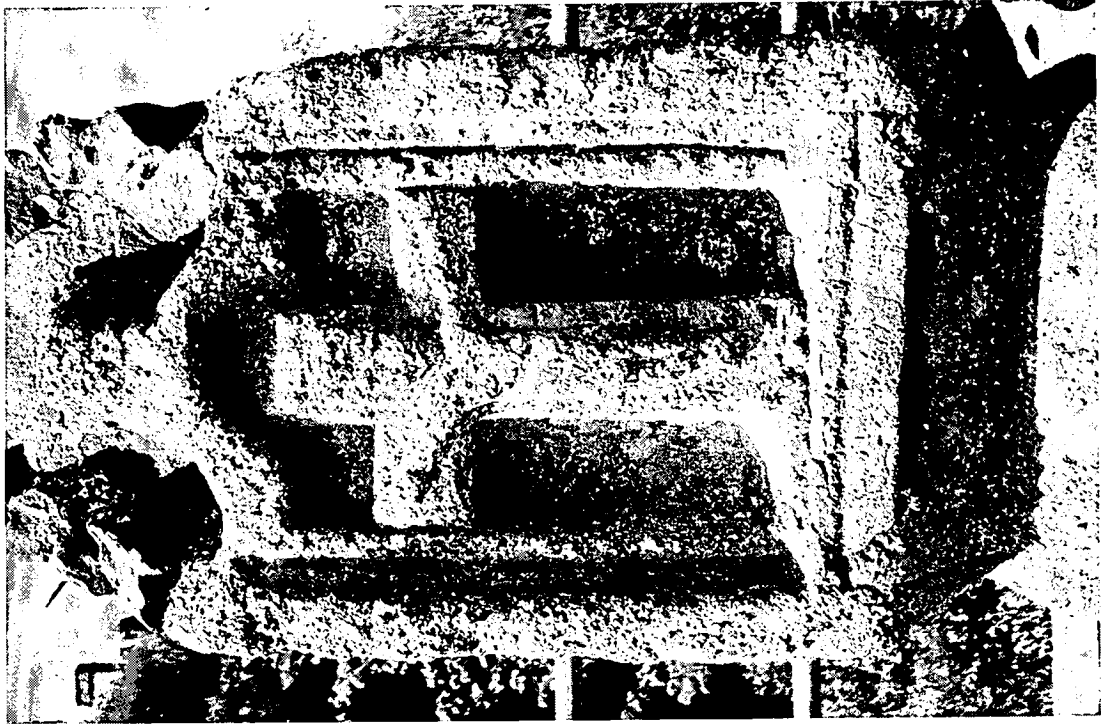
Saint Michael's Mount

J. Piers St Aubyn Architect

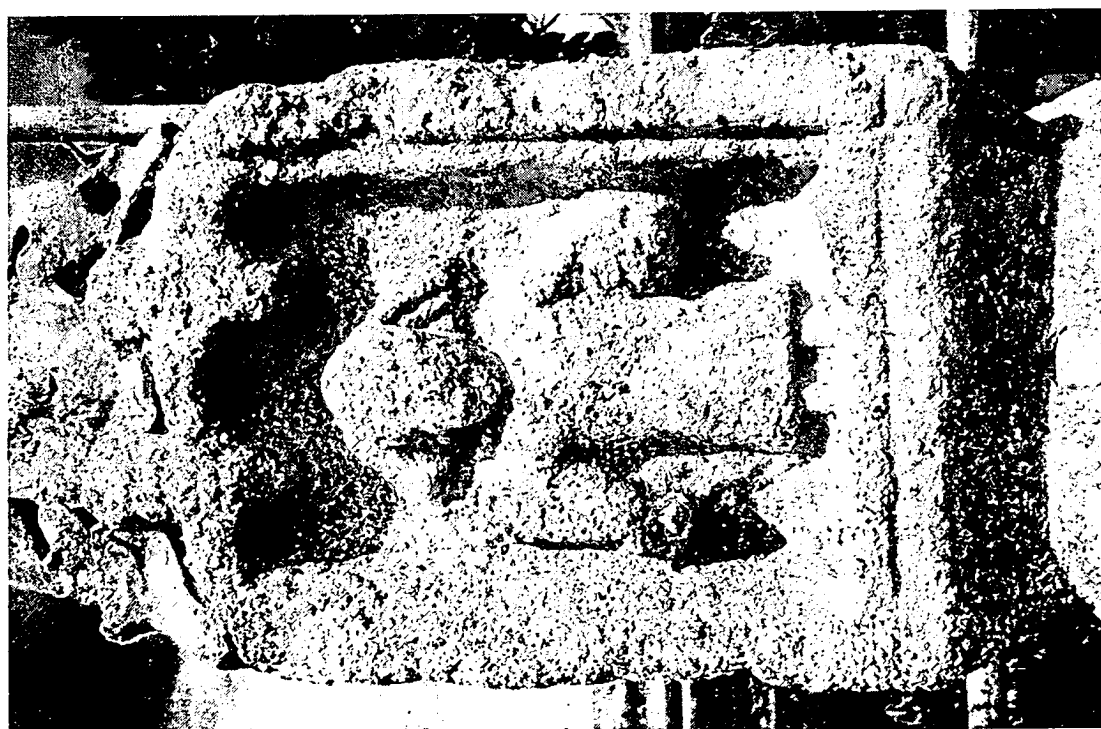
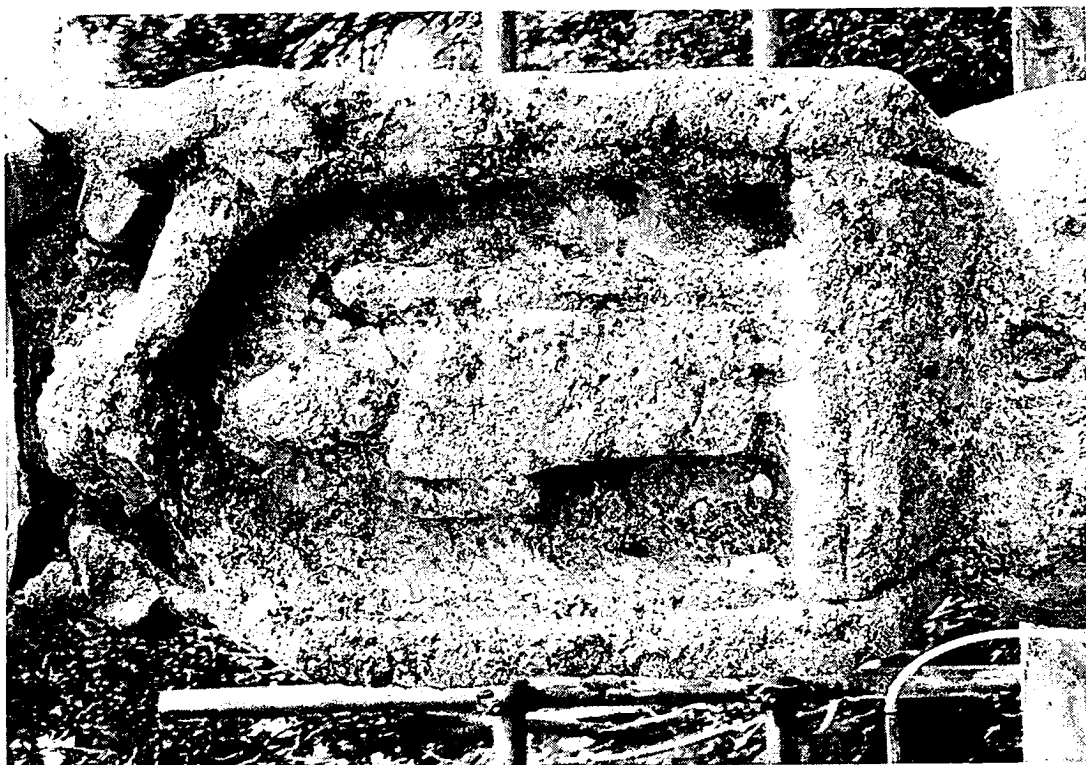
*Fig 8. The lantern cross in the garden is visible as a sky-line feature, on a rocky outcrop, to the left of the castle, in this illustration of 1887.*



*Fig 9. The lantern cross in the gardens, before removal of lichen (Mary and Child).*



*Fig10 . Lantern Cross in the gardens (Mary and Child on left, Crucifixion on right)*



*Fig 11. Lantern Cross in the gardens (left, an unknown saint; right, a bishop)*



*Fig 12.. Conservation work in progress on the Roman Cement pinnacle of the lantern cross in the gardens.*