



St Buryan Churchyard Cross, Cornwall  
Archaeological recording and watching brief during  
repairs



# **St Buryan Churchyard Cross, Cornwall Archaeological recording and watching brief during repairs**

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| <b>Client</b>           | <b>St Buryan PCC</b>   |
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The CAU Project Managers were James Gossip and Ann Preston-Jones.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of Cornwall Archaeological Unit and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

## **Freedom of Information Act**

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Cover illustration

The restored cross from the west (AGL).

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## **Abbreviations**

|      |  |
|------|--|
| CAU  | Cornwall Archaeological Unit                                 |
| CIfA | Chartered Institute for Archaeologists                       |
| CRO  | Cornwall Record Office                                       |
| GNSS | Global Navigation Satellite System                           |
| GPS  | Global Positioning by Satellite                              |
| HER  | Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record |
| NGR  | National Grid Reference                                      |
| OD   | Ordnance Datum – height above mean sea level at Newlyn       |
| OS   | Ordnance Survey  |
| PCC  | Parochial Church Council                                     |



## **1 Summary**

The churchyard cross at St Buryan is a monument of considerable significance. It consists of a four-holed cross carved with a Crucifixion and five bosses, set in a granite base-stone and mounted on a four-stepped square pedestal. The cross-head may date from the tenth century and the steps possibly from the later medieval period. The condition of the steps had deteriorated, to the extent that this was a concern for Historic England, who placed the monument on the Heritage at Risk register. Fortunately, a grant was arranged to help restore the steps and the work took place in March 2016.

This report summarises the repair work to the base, and describes the associated archaeological research and recording. Recording was made difficult by the method used for repair, which involved stones being removed and replaced singly, rather than as a whole side, as had been envisaged originally. Nonetheless the findings were of interest in revealing that the present stepped pedestal is effectively a shell, created in the first half of the nineteenth century. It entombs the remains of an earlier set of steps. As it was not necessary to dismantle these steps, it was not possible to provide a date for this hidden element of the monument, which therefore remains intact for future investigation. Re-used amongst the quarried stone of the nineteenth century shell were one certain and two possible early grave slabs. The definite grave slab had mouldings on it suggestive of an eleventh century date.

St Buryan Churchyard Cross, located at SW 4091 2569, is a Scheduled Monument, 115060, and number 106286 in Cornwall's Historic Environment Record.



Fig 1 Location map.

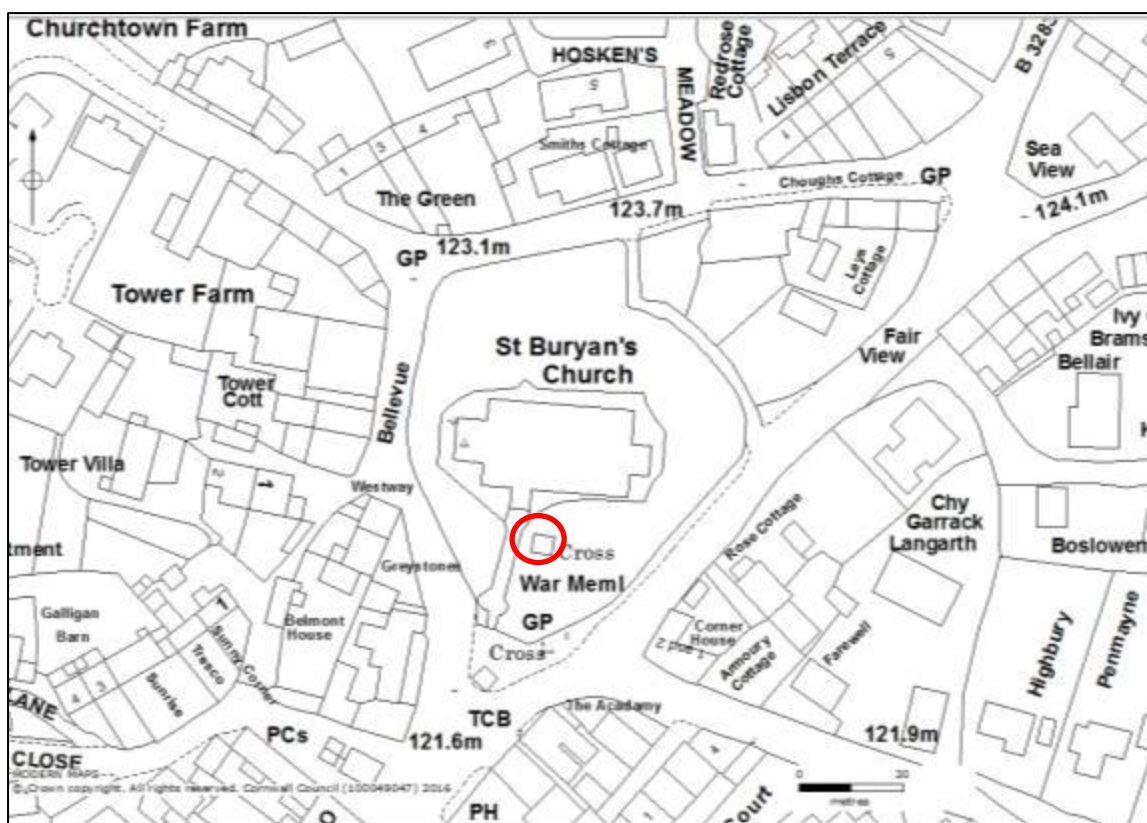


Fig 2 Site extent.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Project background

Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) was invited to tender for archaeological work required by Historic England during proposed conservation works to St Buryan Churchyard Cross, St Buryan, Cornwall. The work was commissioned by St Buryan PCC.

The monument consists of the head of an early medieval cross, mounted on a stepped granite pedestal of possible late medieval origin. With time, the pedestal had slumped and its stonework was in poor condition. The conservation work was intended to restore and consolidate this stepped base.

The conservation work was organised and overseen by David Scott of Scott and Co Building Surveyors and undertaken by Edward Bolitho (and team) of St Buryan. The archaeological recording work was undertaken by James Gossip, Joanna Sturgess and Ryan Smith of CAU, who were assisted by Andrew Langdon, a local volunteer with a particular knowledge of Cornish crosses.

Note that as several people were involved in the recording work involved with this project, the attribution of all photos included in this report is indicated by the use of individuals' initials.

### 2.2 Aims

The aims and objectives of the archaeological recording associated with the conservation work were outlined in the project brief prepared by the Heritage at Risk Project Officer (HARPO) for Historic England.

The site specific aims were to:

- record the cross and pedestal in its pre-conservation condition
- undertake a watching brief when the stones were removed from the stepped pedestal/plinth
- record the stones in the stepped pedestal as they were being removed, noting any re-use, carving, or evidence of dating (eg, granite splitting marks)
- dismantle the core of the pedestal archaeologically, recording appropriately
- excavate the ground beneath the pedestal to the extent and depth required for underpinning the rebuilt steps
- record the restored monument
- work with St Buryan Church PCC, volunteers and visitors to interpret and explain the monument and its conservation
- produce a report setting out the results of the project.

### 2.3 Methods

#### 2.3.1 Desk-based assessment

During the desk-based assessment historical databases and archives were consulted in order to obtain information about the history of the site and the structures and features that were likely to survive. The main sources consulted were as follows:

- Cornwall HER.
- Early maps and photographs (see Section 12.1).
- Published histories (see Section 12.2).
- In addition, St Buryan Churchwardens' Accounts at the Cornwall Record Office were consulted by Andrew Langdon.

#### 2.3.2 Fieldwork

Preliminary recording

A preliminary plan and elevation drawings were produced using centimetre-accurate GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System) GPS (Global Positioning by Satellite) and a full photographic record (see Photographic Recording below), with written notes taken to

enhance the survey record. All surveys were geo-referenced and tied into Ordnance Survey mapping.

#### Watching Brief

An archaeologist was present when stones or any other part of the monument were removed for re-setting. Stones were all inspected for evidence of previous use and recorded as necessary. Any stones which were removed from the structure were examined and recorded for evidence of re-use or of the development of the monument.

#### Excavation

It had been originally envisaged that once selected stones have been removed for re-setting the archaeologist would carefully excavate the core of the plinth by hand, to record any evidence of earlier structures, phasing or the construction or repair of the plinth. In the event this was not undertaken, due to the method used for repair.

#### Post-conservation recording

On completion of the conservation work a full photographic record was made of the conserved monument.

## **3 Location and setting**

St Buryan is a large churchtown located 125m above sea level on a granite plateau in the southern part of the Land's End peninsula (Figs 1 and 2). At the heart of its parish, and in the centre of the village of St Buryan is the parish church, thought to be the focus of the former College of St Buriana. The churchyard cross is on the south side of the churchyard, on the east side of the main path to the south porch.

## **4 Designations**

### **4.1 National**

The recording, excavation and watching brief covered the whole of the monument at St Buryan Churchyard, St Buryan, Cornwall centred on SW 4091 2569.

The cross is Scheduled Monument 115060, Historic Environment Record 106286 and Listed Building 1137748.

It lies within the Conservation Area of St Buryan.

## **5 The monument**

St Buryan churchyard cross is situated to the south of the porch to St Buryan Parish Church (Fig 2) and comprises a cross set in a base on a four-stepped stone pedestal. The monument is a composite construction with stonework of several periods. The head is part of the original tenth century churchyard cross sitting in a granite base-stone which may be of the same date. The stepped pedestal may be of late medieval or post-medieval origin.

With its Crucifixion on one side of the head and five bosses on the other, the cross-head is typical of pre-Norman crosses in the far west of Cornwall (Preston-Jones and Okasha 2013, 88-91). However, only a small section of the original shaft survives. It is likely that the cross-shaft was cut off and re-used as building stone in the early sixteenth century when the church was extended and rebuilt (Beacham and Pevsner 2014, 509-10). In addition to its historic importance, the cross has significance as a well-known focal point within both the churchyard and village of St Buryan.

The stepped pedestal has always been assumed to be of late medieval origin because the use of a flight of steps to represent the Hill of Calvary is a phenomenon seen especially in crosses of this period, although the crosses surmounting such 'calvaries' are generally tall, octagonal-shafted pillars crowned with a lantern head depicting the Crucifixion, saints, and other religious imagery.

### **5.1 Condition of the monument prior to restoration**

Before the start of this project, the monument was on the Heritage at Risk register. The main area for concern was the stepped pedestal, which is constructed of large blocks of granite trigged with smaller stone. It is assumed that at one time the stepped pedestal would have been neatly levelled and mortared. However, with time, the pedestal had lost all of its mortar and much of the rubble and earth fill had washed out, leaving large gaps between the steps of the pedestal, so that the stones forming the steps were 'loose' and, though large, effectively portable. One was known to have carving on its under surface, and was thought to be part of a re-used medieval grave slab. At the same time, the surrounding ground had settled, causing the steps to slump away from the cross, especially on the east side. As well as threatening the stability of the monument, this situation was a safety issue for the church (see Figs 9 to 16, especially 10, 11 and 12).

## **6 Site history**

St Buryan was the principal pre-Norman church of the Land's End (Penwith) peninsula, and is first recorded in a charter of the first half of the tenth century. In all probability this charter represents a confirmation of the existence of a pre-existing religious house since the saint, Berion, is recorded earlier, in a tenth-century List of Cornish saints. In Domesday Book, the church of St Buryan was held by the Canons of St Berrione and it remained a collegiate church throughout the medieval period (Preston-Jones and Okasha 2013, 127). The head of the churchyard cross with which this project was concerned may originally have been associated with the early collegiate church (Preston-Jones and Langdon 1997, 115, 118; Preston-Jones and Okasha 2013, 126-7).

St Buryan's Churchyard is revealed by the Tithe Map of c 1840 to have been almost circular with a road running all the way around it, until it was extended to the north, sometime before the 1880 OS map was published (Figs 3 – 5). Excavation undertaken when the road alongside the churchyard was widened to accommodate a pavement, in 1985, demonstrated the possibility that the churchyard's enclosure may have begun life as an Iron Age / Romano-British round (Preston-Jones 1987, 153-8).

### **6.1 Records of the cross in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries**

*Andrew Langdon*

This research, undertaken both before and after the repair of the pedestal, confirms with a surprising degree of accuracy the archaeological observations made as conservation work proceeded. Most of the historic depictions were uncovered before work began but the additional information revealed by the churchwardens' accounts was only discovered after the work had taken place.

The churchyard cross is first mapped on the 1880 OS map (Fig 4).

However, it was illustrated by many antiquarians before this, during the nineteenth century and on at least one occasion during the eighteenth. Unfortunately there is a great deal of variation in the standard and likely accuracy of the various depictions. Some are realistic, some interpretive, and some reproduce the monument over-neatly, as though it were built of 'Lego blocks'. In all probability some of the illustrations, being etchings, were made by people who had never actually seen the stone. From these, those which are most likely to give a true representation of the monument at key points in the nineteenth century are shown in Figures 6 to 8.

The earliest reference describing and illustrating the churchyard cross appears in a hand-written account of Richard Gough's *Tour of Cornwall* in 1765 (Gough and Padel 2009, 80). Gough included a sketch showing a general view of the parish church looking through the main south gate to the churchyard; this shows the small cross standing outside the churchyard while inside the churchyard, partly hidden by the churchyard wall, is the churchyard cross. Smaller sketches on the same page of the notebook show the cross-head in more detail, front and back. The illustration of the back shows the head only but that of the front (the side with the Crucifixion) shows the cross-head on its base-stone supported on a flight of three steps plus the base-stone. The bottom step appears very overgrown and almost hidden by grass.

During the nineteenth century at least ten different illustrations of the cross were published, some showing little artistic merit and giving conflicting information about the monument. It was illustrated from both the west (the face with the Crucifixion) and from the east (the face displaying the five bosses). Some of these antiquarian depictions show the cross on its base-stone supported by a flight of three steps while others show the cross-head and its base-stone on an overgrown grassy mound with little evidence of steps. Given the probability mentioned above that some of these authors may never have seen the stone, and may be copying one another, they cannot be relied on for accuracy. That these early publications could be extremely inaccurate is shown by Pattison's of 1856 which shows the cross-head on three steps made up of many small stones (Pattison 1856, 18) – an arrangement unsupported by all the other depictions, and by the archaeology (section 7). What is relevant, however, is that all of these authors (except Langdon, 1896 - see Fig 8) show the pedestal with only three steps plus the base-stone.

It seems likely that JS Prout's illustration (published by Vibert), made in 1827 (<http://www.knownbynunn.org.uk/list-images/?entry=6582>, see Fig 6) may be the most accurate, while those which show a more blocky and regular pedestal may have been tidying and interpreting the structure. This shows the cross on a grassy mound with stones just visible beneath the long grass. It suggests that the cross may have suffered further neglect since Gough's illustration of 1765, to the extent that it had become almost completely overgrown. This chimes with the fact that the St Buryan churchwardens' accounts from the 1820s mention repairs to the cross on several occasions (CRO P23/5/3).

For example, churchwarden Ralph Mitchell's accounts of 1820-21 record:

*'for cleaving and carriage of stone for repairing the cross and carriage of clay – 12s 2d'.*

The implication is that the monument was in poor condition; the discrepancy between the date of the accounts and that of Vibert's illustration may perhaps be due to the latter having been made several years before publication. However, these repairs can only have had a temporary or partial effect for in 1838-39, James Tonkin's account records a much larger expenditure:

*'cleaving and carriage of stone for repairing the cross – £2 4s'*

And then in the following year, James Permewan's account (1839-40) records payment of nearly £20 to

*'John Rogers mason, as per bill, for rebuilding the cross and for building a wall from the church stile to the porch, and for working the font and archways of the doors and white washing the church and mending the plaister etc. etc. - £19 15s 9d'.*

The large sum would suggest that this included the cleaving and carriage of all the stones which were required as well as the rebuilding of the cross and walls flanking the path to the church porch. The archaeological watching brief (below, section 7) confirmed the fact that these are all coeval, since the size of the stone-splitting drill holes in the stones of the walls flanking the path corresponds exactly with those in the stones used to re-clad the churchyard cross steps.

Although the steps of the cross were rebuilt during 1839-40, further work of 'repairing the cross' was recorded in 1842 and 1844. Perhaps the repairs were carried out gradually, as the work could be afforded.

Soon after the rebuilding of the cross, Hingston illustrated it in his publication of 1850 (page 34). His illustration, of poor quality, is not necessarily accurate, but Penzance antiquarian John Thomas Blight produced three illustrations of the cross, one showing the parish church and the cross in the foreground which was published in 1865 (page 198) and two illustrations of the cross in 1856 and 1861 (Blight 1856, 19; 1861, 168; see Fig 7). Each illustration shows the cross-head on its base-stone supported on three steps (four steps if you count the base-stone) and in the general illustration, one of two headstones which is now right at the foot of the steps on the east is shown at some distance from the bottom-most step. However, by the time Langdon illustrated the cross for his 1896 publication *Old Cornish Crosses* (page 190, see Fig 8), the cross-head with its base-stone stood on four steps, the bottom tier being of generally smaller stones than the upper three. That Langdon's illustration is accurate is shown by a post-card of c 1900 which is almost identical.

The Churchwardens Accounts do not record any subsequent work on the cross after 1844 so the origin of this bottom flight is unexplained, unless it was linked to the restoration of the parish church or work on the churchyard walls. Work to the churchyard walls was recorded frequently through the nineteenth century and the churchyard was extended in 1835-6; in the 1880s and 1890s copings were being installed (a length of 95 ½ ft. was specified in 1882). However, when significant finance was required to entirely restore the church, the churchwardens launched an appeal; the subscriptions to the St Buryan Church Restoration Fund are recorded in the accounts for 1876. This might also have been the context for further work on the cross - perhaps adding the bottom step, which does not feature in any illustrations before Langdon's of 1896, or the additional step found on the south side in March 2016.

## 7 Archaeological results

James Gossip

A meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016 between David Scott of Scott & Co, the conservation building contractor (Edward Bolitho and team), the Historic England Heritage At Risk Project Officer, CAU (James Gossip and Ryan Smith) and medieval cross specialist Andrew Langdon established a programme of work during which CAU would carry out a watching brief and any necessary controlled excavation. It was understood that a flexible approach to the conservation work was essential as it was uncertain exactly how the monument had been constructed and how stable the core of the structure was.

### 7.1 Structure record

A three dimensional survey (using GPS GNSS) including two profiles (north-south and east-west) recorded the condition of the monument prior to consolidation work (Figs 17, 18). This was enhanced by detailed photographic survey (mainly digital but also black and white 35mm 100 ASA film) (Figs 9 - 16) and a historic building record accompanied by sketch plans and profiles (undertaken by Joanna Sturgess). The condition survey helped illustrate the urgent need for conservation work and provided a guide for the building contractor.

### 7.2 Watching brief results

Ryan Smith

Detailed notes of the watching brief are included in Appendix 1 at the back of this report. The following is a summary of the main findings.

It should be noted that due to an unavoidable change to the methodology for repair, the archaeological watching brief was carried out in adverse conditions. Whereas it had been

envisaged that the entire east side of the pedestal would be dismantled and then rebuilt, giving the opportunity for recording a section through the pedestal and investigation of the ground below it, in the event stones were moved only if necessary, and stones in different rows were moved at different times. The whole base was levelled and consolidated, not just the east side. This meant that the watching brief was restricted to keyhole glimpses of the core of the monument and at no point was there the opportunity to record a cross-section through the core as had originally been planned (Fig 19). Nonetheless, significant information was retrieved and recorded.

### **7.2.1 Evidence for a nineteenth century rebuilding of the pedestal**

Drill holes present in many of the pedestal's large granite blocks (Fig 26) show that the outer four tiers of the monument were made up of stone quarried in the nineteenth century, suggesting a large-scale rebuild of the monument at around this time. This is supported by the evidence of the nineteenth century illustrations and (with hindsight) by the very conclusive documentary evidence of the churchwardens' accounts (above, section 6). The drill holes were consistent in their diameter of 25mm and varied in depth, but ranging between 0.06 and 0.07m. Similar drill holes can be found in the stone making up the wall approaching the south porch confirming that this work was all of the same period. The stone steps leading to the monument from the north-west are likely to be part of this same build.

This nineteenth century rebuild appears to have been fairly poorly constructed, comprising a 'hotchpotch' of available stone which included a number of re-used grave slabs (below), and newly cut blocks.

This is confirmed by the fact that when the ground beneath the south east corner of the pedestal was excavated to a depth of over 0.4m to enable a slab to be laid to provide a firm base, some modern pottery fragments and pieces of a nineteenth century slate headstone were found (Figs 21 and 25).

### **7.2.2 Hidden inner steps**

Behind the outer facing was an earlier, possibly original flight of steps which appears to be *in situ*, but in a poor state of repair. This was built of very much smaller stones (Fig 27), without any drill marks evident (although none of these stones were removed). Various spots were probed to determine the foundation of the wall, but these were never confirmed due to the limited excavation. From this it appears very likely that the nineteenth century refurbishment referred to in the churchwardens' accounts, deduced from the illustrations and confirmed by excavation, had involved building a new stone face or shell over and around the entire original stepped base of the cross, the latter forming the foundation for the new work. From the small glimpses allowed by the work methods, it is likely that this original monument survives in its entirety as a core within the nineteenth century steps. This helps to explain the way in which the plinth had deteriorated - slipping away from the core especially on the east side where grave subsidence may have contributed to the effect - while leaving the cross head apparently firmly set at its apex.

### **7.2.3 The fill of the pedestal, the lack of a foundation, the lowest flight of steps**

The fill behind the outer stone wall/steps placed around the monument and as part of their foundation (visible on the south side) appeared, from that which remained, to have comprised mainly soil and decayed granite stones, possibly waste material made up from dressing the stones on site.

There was no solid core of material to provide a base or foundation for the first tier, as the ground beneath was part of the make-up for the raised graveyard. This soil was very wet and had caused the granite to degrade. This appeared to support the assumption made at the outset that the bottom tier of stone, which contains less massive blocks but includes one or two with drill marks, could have been added after the main rebuild; it might relate to the post-1840 work referred to in the churchwardens' accounts (above) or at the time of the church restoration. It might have been added to prevent movement of the new steps away from the core. An additional, lower, step which was found on the



south side may have been added to provide additional support on that side (Fig 20). However, the existence of graves on the east side might have both contributed to the subsidence on the east side, and prevented the addition of further supporting stones there.

The material behind the upper tiers also consisted of soil and broken pieces of granite along with some other pieces of stone, very loosely compacted with soils very loose to trowel, probably as a result of water ingress. Pottery of fifteenth to nineteenth century date was found within the fill of the outer stones (Fig 25), suggesting the disturbance of earlier deposits during nineteenth century reconstruction. Of course, the origin of these deposits is uncertain.

#### **7.2.4 Early grave-markers**

This nineteenth century refurbishment of the churchyard cross included the use of three stones which, from their size, shape, mouldings, and the nature of the granite, either certainly were or may have been early recumbent grave markers (Figs 22, 23 and 24). The first example was certain, because of the carving on it; the other two stood out because of their size and shape and the fact that the granite, which was more weathered and kaolinised, was clothed with different types of lichen from the nineteenth century cut stones of the rest of the base.

##### **7.2.4.1 Grave marker 1**

Figure 22

This stone had been re-used as a step within the cross pedestal, inverted, on the south-east side. It was clear even before it was removed that it was likely to be a grave slab since the shape was notable and mouldings on it could be felt on the underside, where the pedestal's fill had washed away. When removed it was found to be a long narrow slab of granite, neatly dressed, with a slightly bowed outline, domed upper surface and flat bottom (which had been used as the surface of the step). It is 1.59m in length, 0.34m – 0.39m wide, and up to 0.24m deep. The stone has a raised ridge running centrally along its axis. On one side only is a roll moulding at the angle; there is no corresponding moulding on the opposite long edge or at either of the narrow ends, because these had been trimmed (presumably to help it fit into the pedestal, or for some other, earlier, re-use).

An initial assumption that the grave slab may be of the eleventh century (see for example: <http://www.cornishman.co.uk/restoration-st-buryan-medieval-cross-uncovers/story-28861525-detail/story.html>) has been confirmed by the recent discovery of a very similar grave slab at Lincoln Castle. This latter, which also has a very similar simple raised ridge, was found *in situ* forming the cover of a stone sarcophagus, which was built into the remains of an Anglo-Saxon church beneath Lincoln Castle; the burial that it contained has been dated to the eleventh century (Hilts 2016, 32).

The stone was replaced in its former position, upside down on the south-east corner of the stepped pedestal. See appendix 2, south side, stone 6.

##### **7.2.4.2 Possible grave marker 2**

Figure 23.

A stone on the north side of the plinth may likewise be a re-used early grave marker. It is of a similar type of granite to number 1, of a similar length with a roughly domed top, and base dressed flat but was undecorated. Drill marks showed that this stone had been truncated on one long side and one end had been cut – presumably to help it fit as a step in the pedestal.

The stone is 1.26m long, and 0.4m at its widest point, tapering to 0.31m and 0.32m at either end. See appendix 2, stone 16, north side.

##### **7.2.4.3 Possible grave marker 3**

Figure 24.

A stone on the east side which is of a different type of granite to the rest of the plinth may also represent the remains of a grave slab. It has less silica or crystal content, and was worked on the top and bottom, truncated on the side which had been facing outward, and the face had been dressed. It was 1.45m in length, 0.35m – 0.37m in width, and approximately 0.22m – 0.27m deep. The undressed side had been damaged with a large chunk of material having been removed, creating a 0.13m indent. Although it may have been a grave slab, or stone re-used from an earlier phase of building on the site (not recently quarried), there was no visible decoration.

See appendix, stone 12, east side.

### **7.2.5 Headstone**

Figures 33 and 34.

A granite headstone buried deeply in the ground close to the cross was re-set at a higher level. The inscription, hitherto buried, proved worn, but could just be interpreted:

WILLIAM  
LADNER  
DIED MARCH  
28 1800

This stone had presumably become buried in the nineteenth century, perhaps in 1839-40 when the wall to the south porch of the church was being built and the cross repaired (see above section 6.2). That the churchyard level had been raised in the nineteenth century by at least 0.4m was shown when excavation beneath the corner of the cross-pedestal revealed sherds of modern pottery and slate headstone at this depth (section 7.2.2).

## **8 Conservation**

### **8.1 Proposed method**

The method proposed for conservation was to carry out a partial repair focussed on re-setting the stones on the east side and the returns on the north and south sides where stones were the most slumped. Each of these areas was expected to require re-setting on a new mortar foundation. The remaining steps were to be consolidated in place by pointing and replacement of small trigging stones where necessary.

### **8.2 Actual conservation method March 2016**

Figures 28-32.

In the event, practical considerations (the difficult access, meaning that it was not possible to use machinery for lifting stones, the size and weight of the individual stones) meant that a rather different work method had to be used. In summary, the entire face of the monument was taken apart and rebuilt, stone by stone; each stone being levelled and secured with a new core and foundation of rab (the local granitic subsoil). After this, the whole pedestal was repointed in a lime mortar which incorporated a percentage of rab, ensuring a good match with the granite of which the pedestal is built.

The initial stage of the work involved the removal of a strip of turf from the south and east sides of the monument, no more than 1m in width. This was to protect the turf and enable it to be relaid at the end of the project. To set a level for rebuilding the pedestal, the corners were tackled first, starting on the south-west, by moving aside the corner stones, digging down in search of more solid ground, and then infilling with rab and smaller stone as necessary to produce a sound and more even base from which to reconstruct the lowest tier of steps. Thereafter, granite blocks surrounding the monument were re-set, one by one. They were not removed from the monument, but levered to one side or placed on their front-facing side to allow access for the cleaning out of loose material, broken stones and earth and the introduction of local rab to consolidate the position of the stone.

After all the stones had been levelled and the entire core infilled with well-compacted rab, the pedestal was fully and deeply repointed. Mortar samples were prepared and discussed with David Scott and finally, a hydraulic lime mortar was used to repoint the entire pedestal in a flush finish. The mortar included NHL 5 in a 1:2.5 mix with an aggregate that included crushed elvan to give it a coarse texture and dark colour, sieved rab to help it blend with the granite and Padstow sand to provide fines. Care was taken to ensure that rain water would be shed and not pool on the steps. Finally, turf was re-laid around the pedestal and the site left tidy (Fig 35 and front cover).

As a bonus, a deeply set headstone of c1800 to the south of the base, of which only the top few inches had been protruding through the churchyard turf, was lifted and reset at a higher level so that the inscription would be fully legible (Figs 33 and 34).

A time capsule prepared by pupils of St Buryan School was included in the pedestal, before repointing took place.

## 9 Conclusion

It was clear upon inspection and recording that the monument required urgent attention. Slumping of stonework was particularly prevalent along the eastern side, with both north-east and south-west corners moving outwards, probably as a result of loss of the material used to bed the steps in the nineteenth century. There was also evidence for slumping of the south-west corner, and large voids had opened up between many of the stone blocks, some of which had been filled by smaller stones as part of *ad hoc* repair. The central stone serving as the cross base appeared stable, suggesting that the core of the structure beneath this point – that is, the original pedestal – was sound.

Conservation methodology was such that stones were only moved if necessary, limiting the investigation of internal deposits and features. Nonetheless, a key finding was that the present appearance of the monument is the result of nineteenth century restoration.

Drill holes present in many of the large granite blocks show that the outer four tiers of the monument were made up mainly of stone quarried in the nineteenth century, along with a few older, re-used stones, suggesting a large-scale rebuild of the monument at around this time. The evidence of archaeology shows that this was simply a re-facing which preserved the steps of an original pedestal within it. This is supported by the nineteenth century documentary evidence.

The partial collapse of the outer 'shell' of the monument was due to a rebuild in the nineteenth century that involved insufficiently stable core material and poor bonding (there is no evidence that it was repointed). The presence of two graves close to the eastern side of the monument may have caused some slumping as grave backfill settled. The condition of the monument prior to the nineteenth century rebuild is illustrated by JS Prout's engraving (Fig 6) – clearly it was decided to invest in the structure at this time, creating a larger and more impressive monument. However, the Churchwardens' Accounts show that this was in fact only one part of a massive programme of works in the churchyard at the time: a programme which included the churchyard walls and culminated with the full restoration of the church in the 1870s.

It is likely that the fairly well-preserved steps of the original monument survive beneath the stones of the nineteenth century rebuild, preserved and protected in the core for the future. The two possible and one certain early grave slabs re-used as part of the rebuild are valuable finds, the latter likely to date from the eleventh century and a tangible link with the time when Domesday Book records that the *Canonici S Berrione ten Eglosberrie* 'the canons of St Buryan hold St Buryan's Church' (Thorn and Thorn 1979, 4,27).

## 10 References

### 10.1 Primary sources

- Ordnance Survey, c1880. 25 Inch Map First Edition (licensed digital copy at CAU)
- Ordnance Survey, c1907. 25 Inch Map Second Edition (licensed digital copy at CAU)
- Ordnance Survey, 2007. Mastermap Digital Mapping
- Tithe Map and Apportionment, c1840. Parish of St Buryan (licensed digital copy at CRO)
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### 10.2 Publications

- Beacham, P. and Pevsner, N., 2014. *The Buildings of England, Cornwall*, New Haven and London.
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- Preston-Jones, A. and Langdon, A. G., 1997. 'St Buryan Crosses', *Cornish Archaeology* 36, 107-28.
- Preston-Jones, A. and Okasha, E., 2013. *Early Cornish Sculpture, Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture XI*, Oxford.
- Prout, J.S., 1827. *St Buryan Churchyard* (engraving), published J. Vibert, Penzance.
- Thorn, C. and Thorn, F. (eds), 1979. *Domesday Book 10, Cornwall*, Chichester.

### 10.3 Websites

- <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/> English Heritage's online database of Sites and Monuments Records, and Listed Buildings
- <http://www.knownbynunn.org.uk>

## 11 Project archive

The CAU project number is **146562**

The project's documentary, digital, photographic and drawn archive is maintained by Cornwall Archaeological Unit

Electronic data is stored in the following locations:

Project admin: \\Sites\Sites B\St Buryan Churchyard WB 2016

Digital photographs: \\Historic Environment (Images)\Sites Q-T\Sites S\St Buryan Churchyard cross 2016

Electronic drawings: \\Historic Environment (CAD)\ Sites S\St Buryan Churchyard Cross 14656

The finds have been returned to St Buryan Church.

Historic England/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2-262160



Fig 3 Tithe Map, c1840.

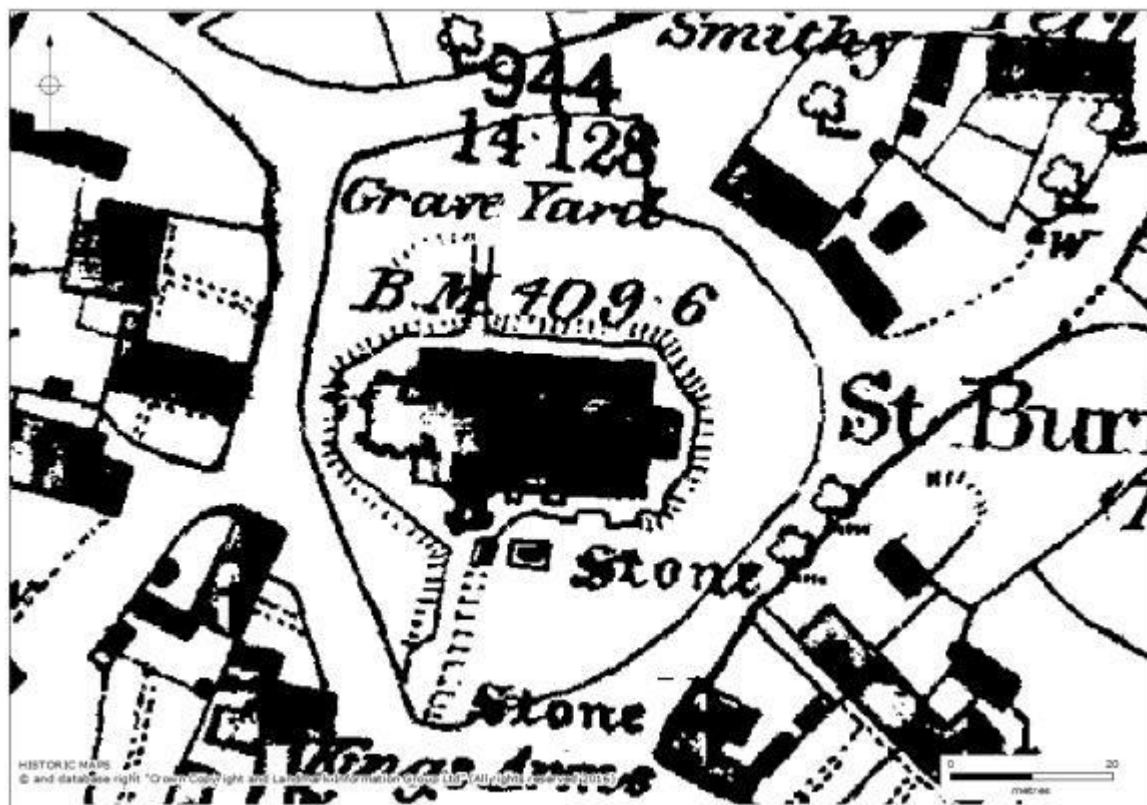


Fig 4 First Edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, c1880.

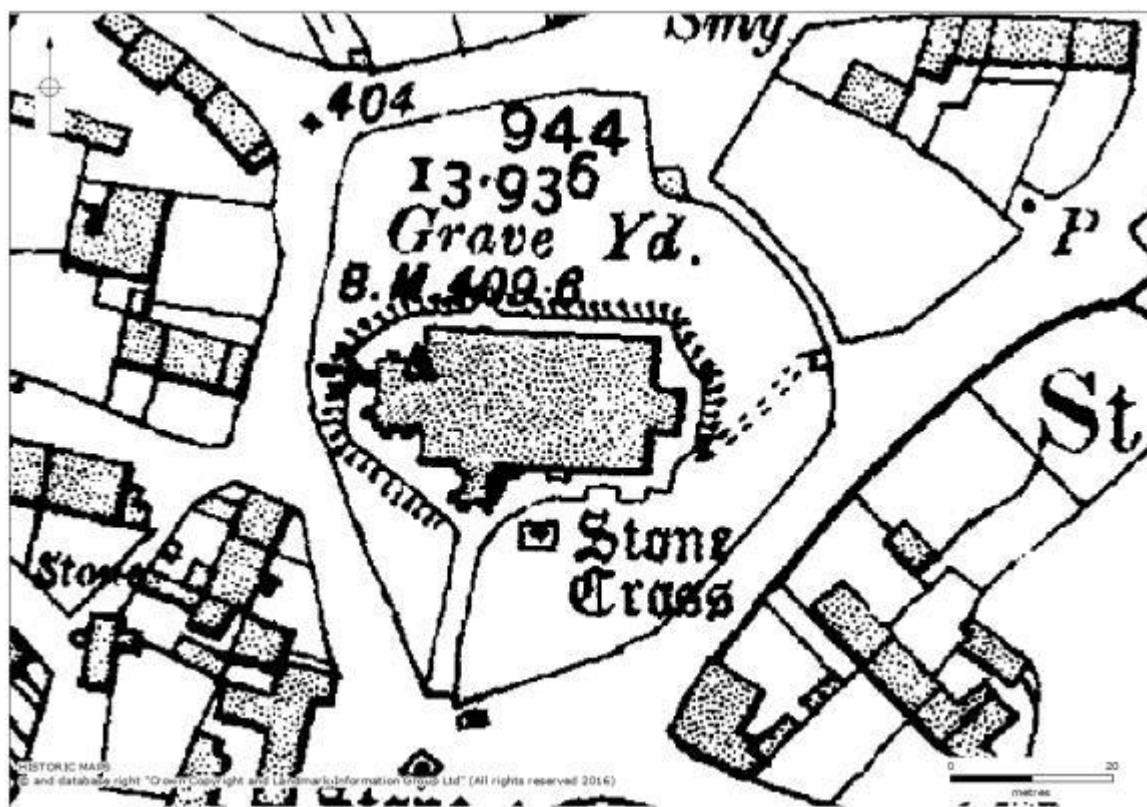


Fig 5 Second Edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, c1907.

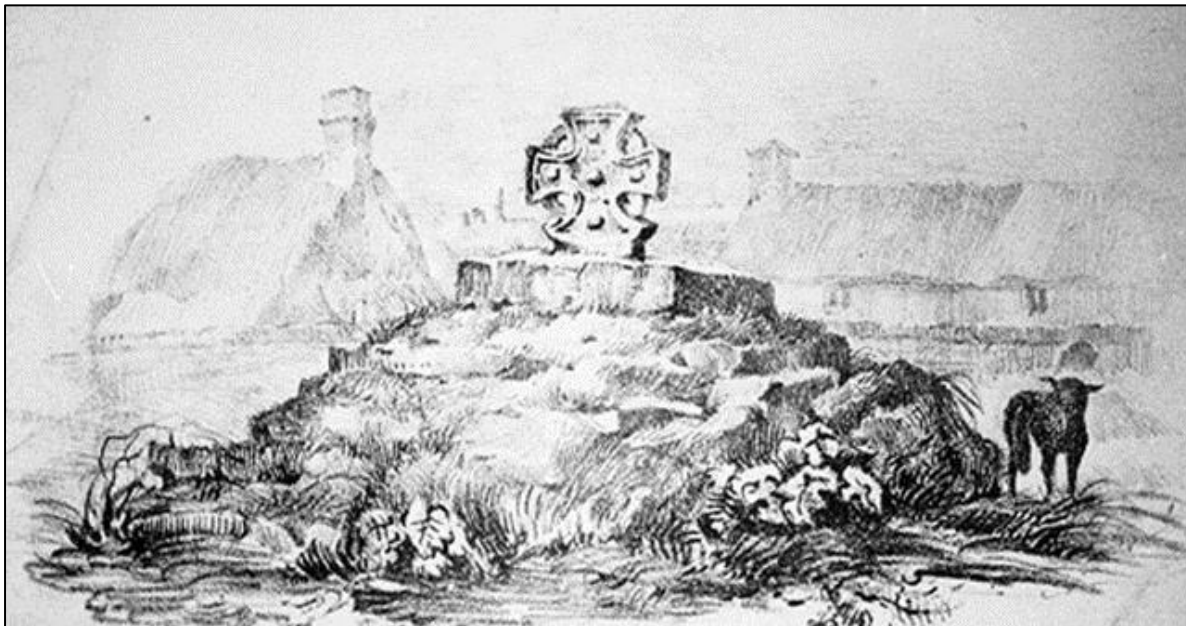


Fig 6 1827 Engraving of the cross (JS Prout).



Fig 7 Blight 1861, 168 (inset) and 1865, 198.



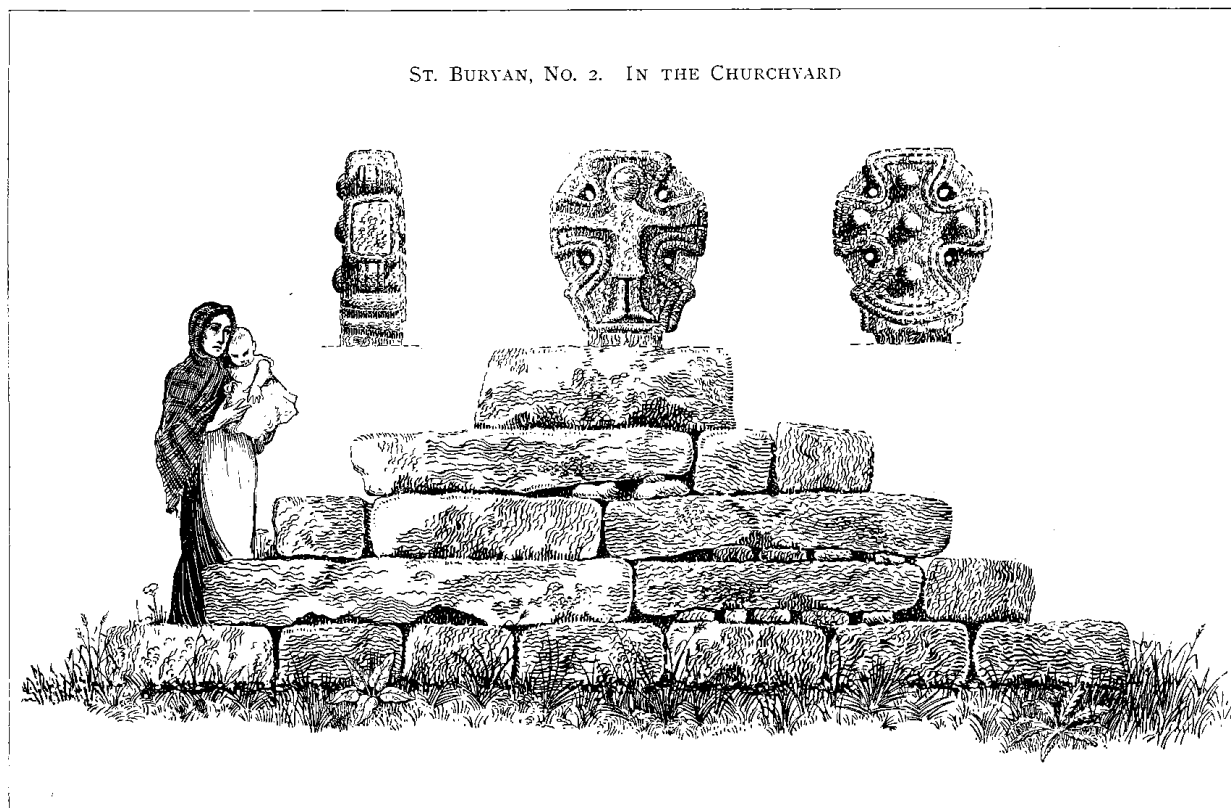


Fig 8 St Buryan Cross by AG Langdon (1896, 190).



Fig 9 South elevation (JG).



Fig 10 South east corner (JG).



Fig 11 Detail of south east corner showing uneven and collapsing stonework (JG).



Fig 12 South west corner showing slumping of stonework (JG).



Fig 13 North east corner (JG).



Fig 14 East elevation (JG).



Fig 15 North elevation, showing slumping towards the east (left) (JG).



Fig 16 West elevation (JG).

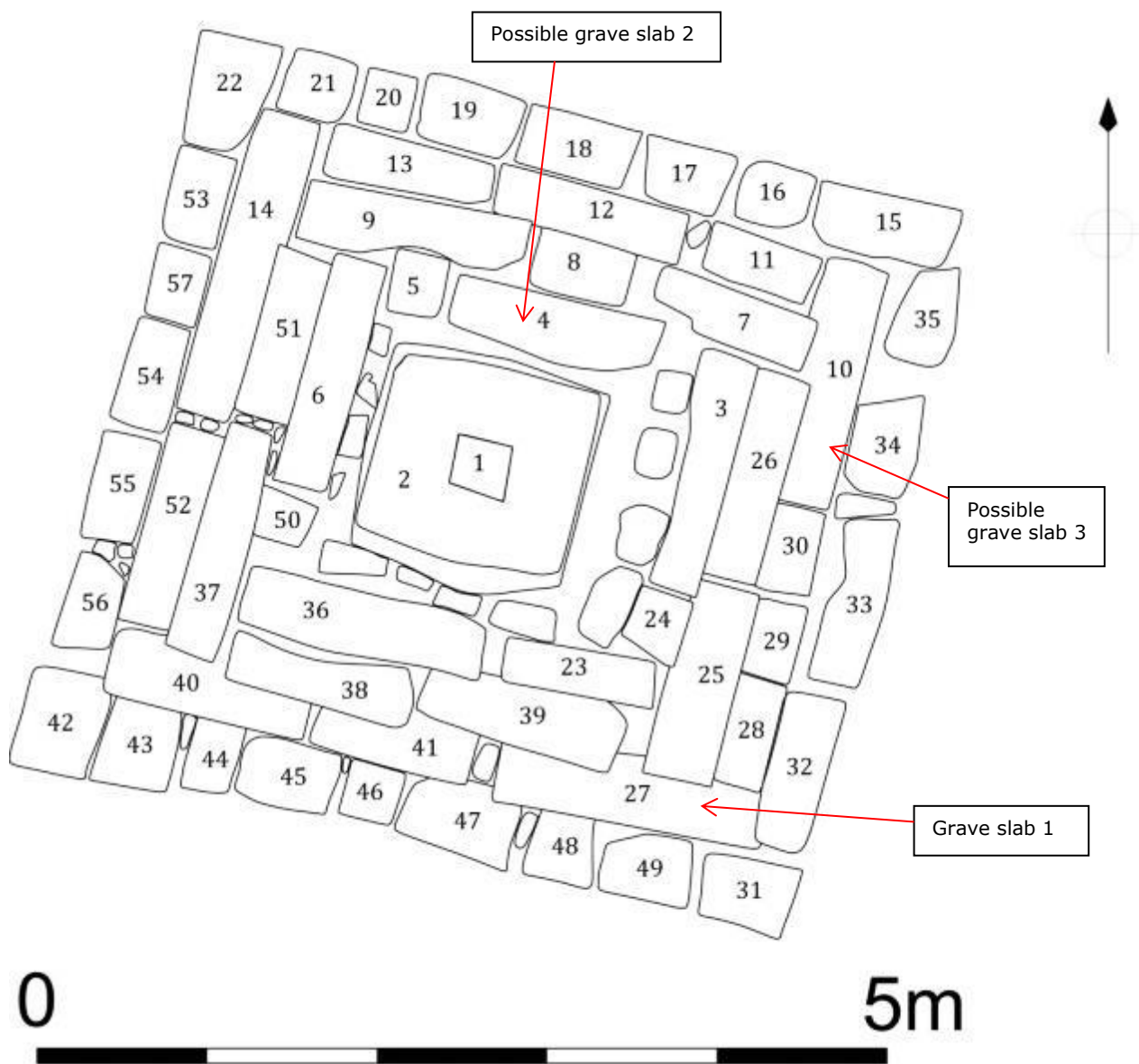


Fig 17 Plan survey of the monument (JG).

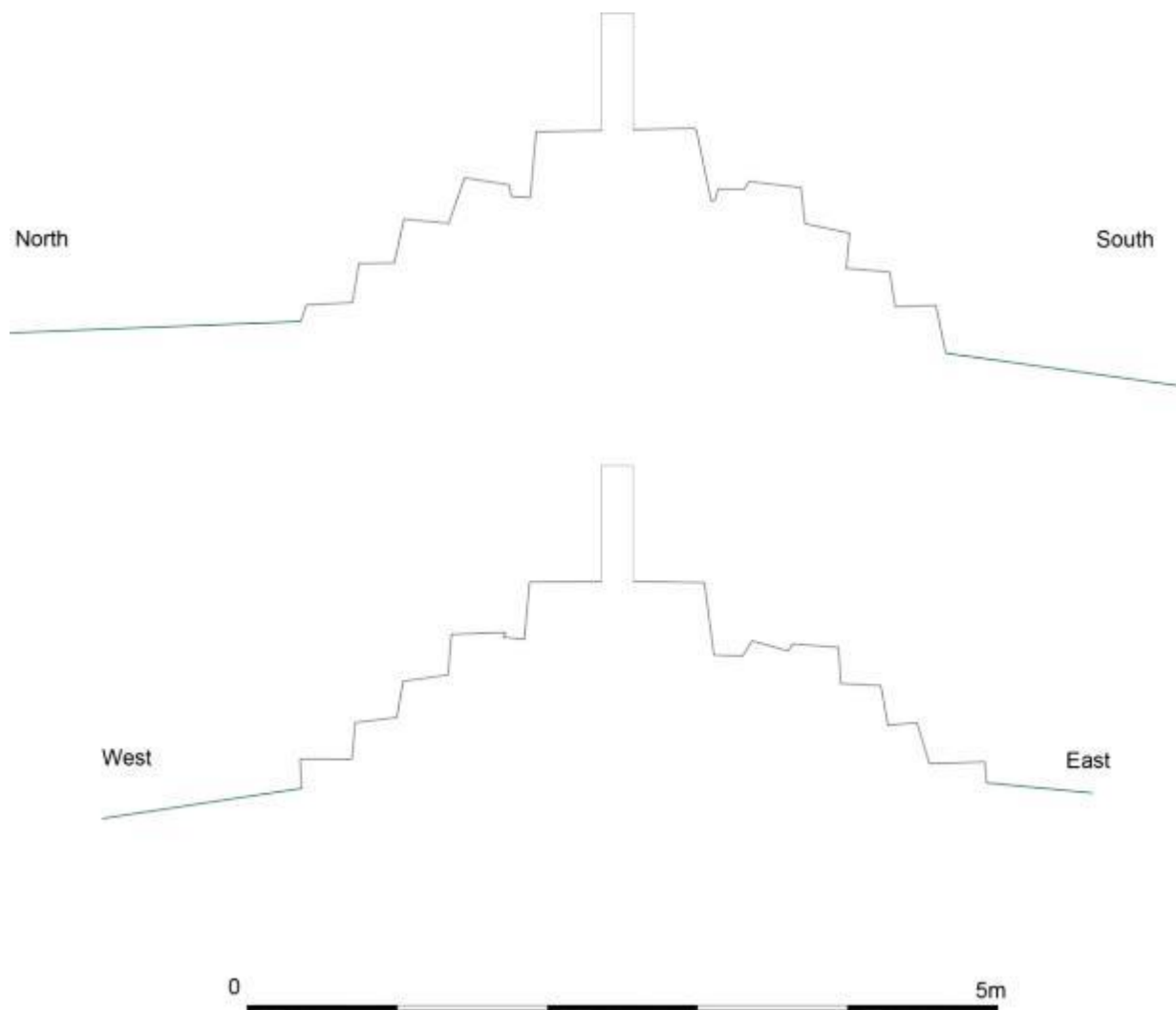


Fig 18 Monument profiles prior to conservation work (JG).



*Fig 19 Recording by Ryan Smith proceeds in tandem with the repairs to the cross pedestal (AGL).*





Fig 20 The additional paving or steps found on the south side, after removal of turf (RS).



Fig 21 Fragments of headstone found under south-east corner of pedestal (RS).



Fig 22 Grave slab 1 (RS, AGL).



*Fig 23 Possible grave slab 2 (RS).*



*Fig 24 Possible grave slab. Unusual stone no 3 (RS).*



*Fig 25 Pottery (RS).*

- 1. Staffordshire Ware glazed pot SF1*
- 2. SF1 unglazed pot SF2*
- 3. SF3 Unglazed pot*
- 4. Side profile unglazed pot SF3. All RS*



*Fig 26 Drill marks (AGL).*

*Above – seen in profile before removal from the plinth and below – one of the drill holes being measured. All the drill holes were approximately 2.5 cm across, and indicative of a nineteenth century date.*



*Fig 27 Wall or face of older step hidden within the nineteenth century 'shell', north-west corner (RS).*





*Fig 28 Conservation work begins on the south-west corner (AGL).*



*Fig 29 Conservation work in progress: the grave slab being moved aside (AGL).*



Fig 30 Conservation work in progress: view from the tower (AGL).



Fig 31 Conservation work in progress: the use of rab (local orangey-brown granitic subsoil) to level the stones can be seen in this picture (in the stonework joints and in the wheelbarrow) (AGL).



Fig 32 Conservation work in progress: deep pointing of the joints of the cross pedestal in a lime-based mortar (AGL, APJ).



*Fig 33 Conservation work in progress: raising an early headstone adjacent to the cross (AGL).*



*Fig 34 Conservation work in progress: the headstone revealed (AGL).  
It reads WILLIAM LADNER DIED MARCH 28 1800*



Fig 35 The repaired cross-pedestal: from the west (AGL) and from the north-east (APJ).

## **Appendix 1 Watching brief notes by Ryan Smith**

### **Working methods**

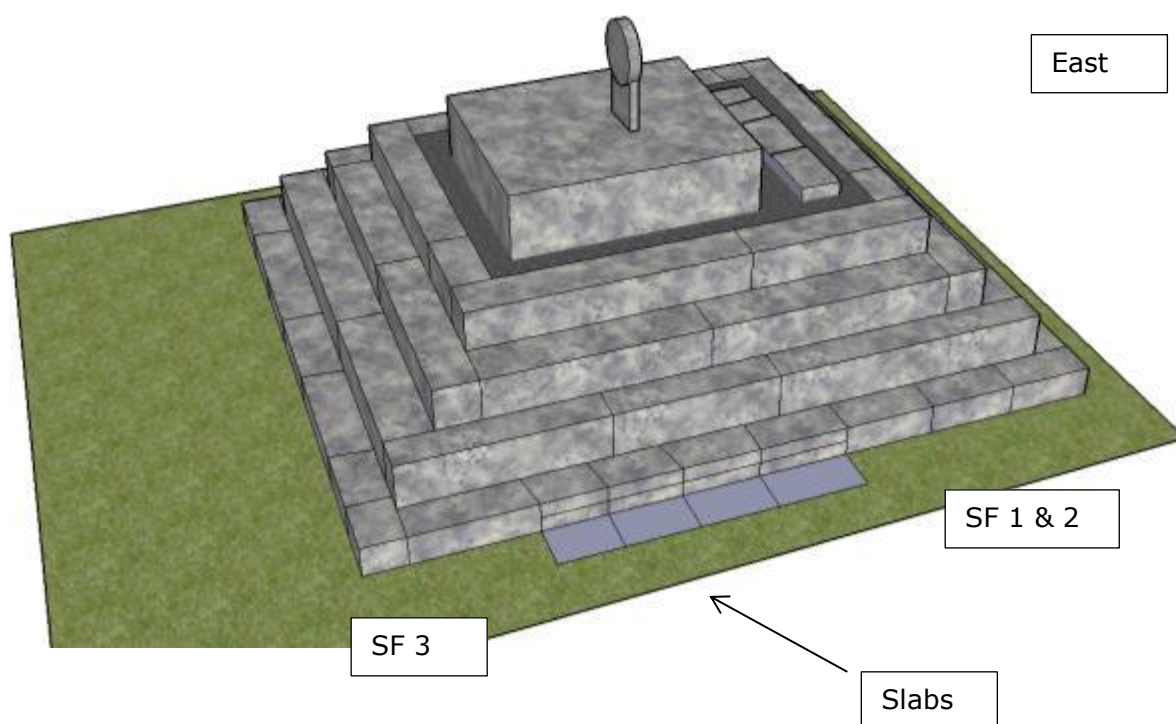
Initial stage of the work involved the removal of a strip of turf from the south and east sides of the monument, no more than 1m in width. The pieces of stone surrounding the large granite cross-base at the top of the monument were then removed individually to allow closer examination of the interior, as well as levelling of the plinth.

Granite blocks surrounding the monument were then moved, but not removed from the monument, being either slid to one side to allow access for the cleaning out of loose material, broken stones and earth and the introduction of local rab to consolidate the position of the stone, or placed on their front facing side.

Stones were moved only if necessary. This meant that stones in the same row were moved at different times, if at all, which made recording extremely difficult.

## Results

### South side



*3D image of the cross, showing the location of the newly-discovered steps and the small finds.*

Work started on the south side of the monument.

Initial de-turfing around the edge of the monument immediately revealed four granite stones 103 set into the ground adjacent to the monument and almost central to the location of the cross. These appeared to be the remains of paving, or more likely of a lower step. The western side of the revealed paving or step was approximately 1m from the western edge of the first tier, the eastern side, and 1.5m from the eastern edge.

It was notable that the stones appeared to be of a finer granite than those forming the main steps of the monument and could perhaps be part of an earlier construction phase. This might be supported by the fact that when looking at the south side of the monument prior to reconstruction, the south east and south west corners had both suffered from slumping whereas the centre area had not and appeared to consist of at least two layers of smaller stones with a different granite stone laid on top. In addition to this the two stones revealed to the east were half the size of the slabs to the west and may in fact be one stone broken in half and then re-laid.

The removal of turf at the SW corner revealed a dark brown almost black coloured soil (101), varying in depth between 0.2m and 0.3m; the soil was loose and contained small stones (broken granite and slate). This soil lay over a mid brown loose soil (102), containing rab (decayed granite and clay). It was loose and appeared to retain more water than the surface layer. Both layers are presumably redeposited, as the level of the

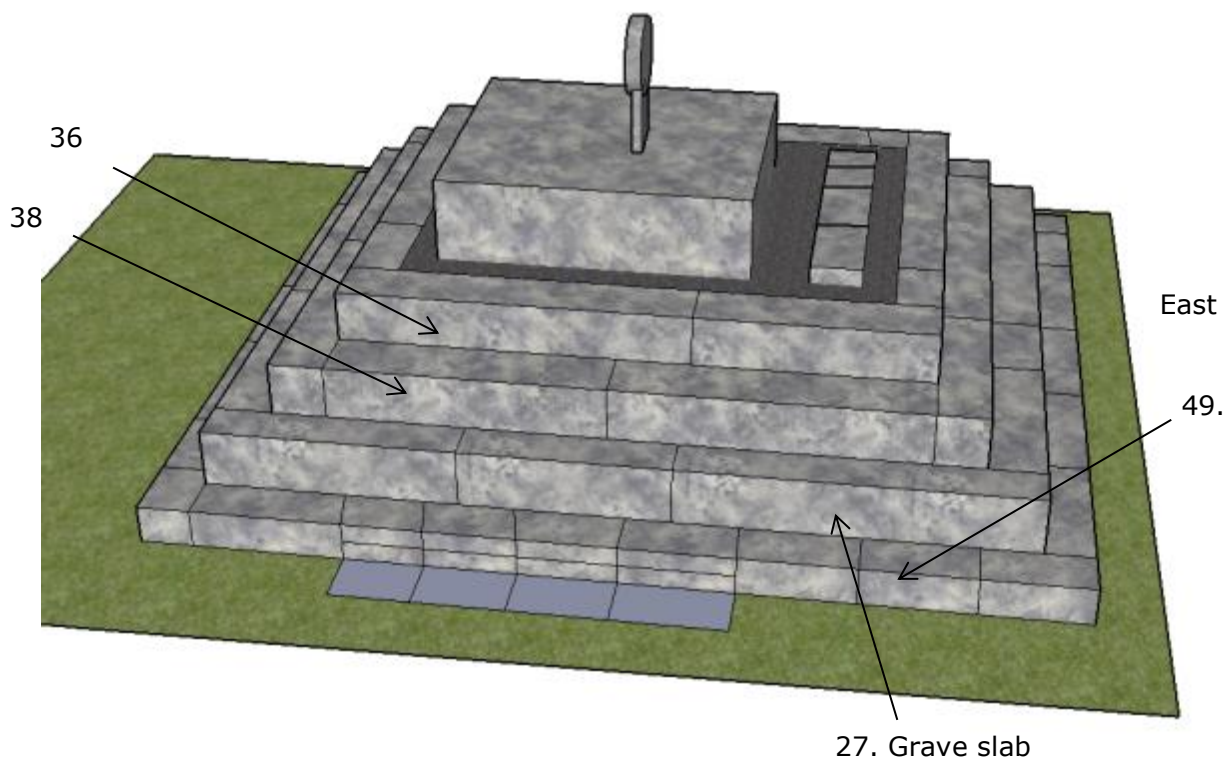
graveyard has been artificially raised over time with repeated burial. Excavation here did not reveal any evidence that the plinth had a foundation. At the south west corner stones of the first tier were removed, and a single piece of pottery was found underneath one of the stones embedded in (101)/(102), (SF3).

De-turfing on the SE also showed that the ground consisted of an approximately 0.2m layer of soft dark soil (104), fine and very loose, lying on top of a lighter brown soil (105), with a higher content of clay. There were some stones (granite) within the soil but nothing to determine the existence of a foundation for the plinth. In fact, in places (eg, east of the four 'new' slabs 103 and close to the SE corner) the work to provide a more secure foundation in the soft soil went down for approximately 0.4m. Three pieces of slate (SF4), the remains of a headstone of possible eighteenth or nineteenth century origin, were recovered from this area.. Two pieces of pottery were also recovered from this area. One appeared to be Staffordshire ware (SF1), glazed with stripes, yellow with brown-black stripes. The second piece appeared unglazed and a bit cruder in manufacture (SF2).

As the first of the larger stones from the monument 106 were moved and turned over for closer archaeological investigation, it became apparent that the majority of the larger slabs exhibited drill marks. These stones also were only dressed on the exterior facing away from the monument; their settings were haphazard and they were not laid as in a normally constructed wall. Drill holes were approx. 0.03m in diameter and averaged 0.06m in depth; some stones exhibited the drill marks on the edge, implying splitting, whilst others contained holes in the middle of the stone.



South side – details of individual stones



Stone number:

27. Grave slab, 1.59m length, 0.37m width, rebates on east and west ends 0.36m in length, 0.05m indent max. Exhibited a raised ridge in the centre, on the south side a double line was also observed running along the edge, appearing to be remnants of decoration. Grave marker 1 in main text (page 17).

36. Block of granite, 4<sup>th</sup> tier, 1.49m long, 0.25m wide max, 0.19m wide min, facing on the exterior, irregular base and rear, sides appeared to have been dressed. This had four drill holes along the edge. From the west side, drill holes were:

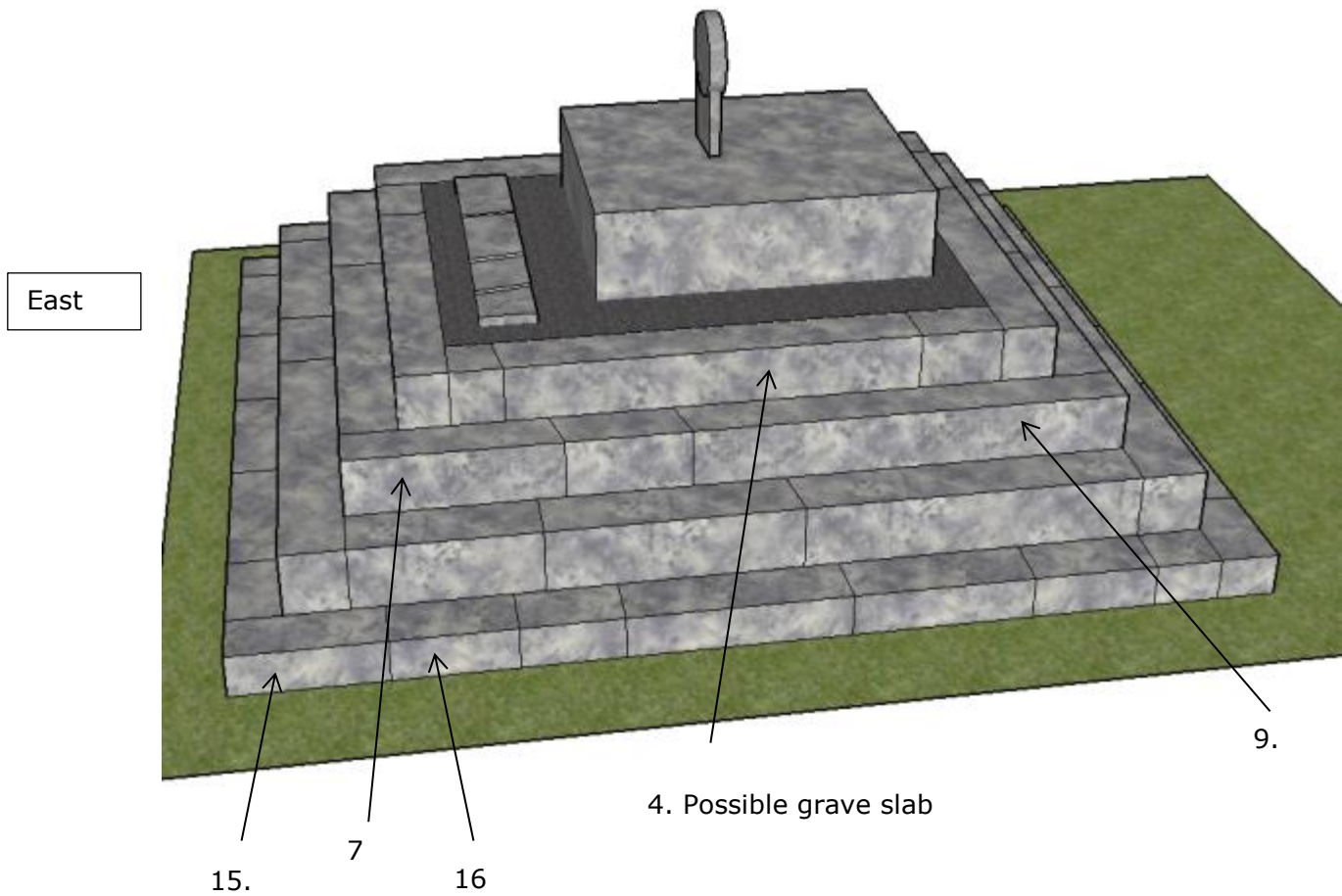
| Distance from west side | Depth | Diameter |
|-------------------------|-------|----------|
| 0.17m                   | 0.05m | 0.03m    |
| 0.46m                   | 0.05m | 0.03m    |
| 0.74m                   | 0.06m | 0.03m    |
| 1m                      | 0.06m | 0.03m    |

38. Block of granite 1.12m long, 0.22m depth, faced on the exterior, irregular base and rear, sides appeared to have been faced. Contained four drill holes along the edge of the stone (would have originally been facing the monument interior). From the east side, drill holes were:

| Distance from east side | Depth  | Diameter |
|-------------------------|--------|----------|
| 0.13m                   | 0.08m  | 0.03m    |
| 0.41m                   | 0.07m  | 0.03m    |
| 0.63m                   | 0.06m  | 0.03m    |
| 0.88m                   | 0.065m | 0.03m    |

49. Smaller block of granite containing a single drilled holed within the base of the stone, not associated with splitting the stone, 0.03m in diameter, 0.06m deep. The stone was no more than 0.5m long, and 0.4m in width.

## North side



Details of individual stones:

Stone number

4. Granite block, appeared to have been truncated on one side, different type of granite to the majority of the stones, 1.26m in length, widest point 0.4m, 0.31m and 0.32m each end. This stone was of a different type of granite to the majority of the stones within the monument, being slightly finer grained and could have possibly been the remains of a grave slab. The base had been dressed, and the curvature on the stone implied earlier working. Grave marker 2 in main text (page 17).

7. Granite block, two drill holes identified but not possible to measure due to positioning.

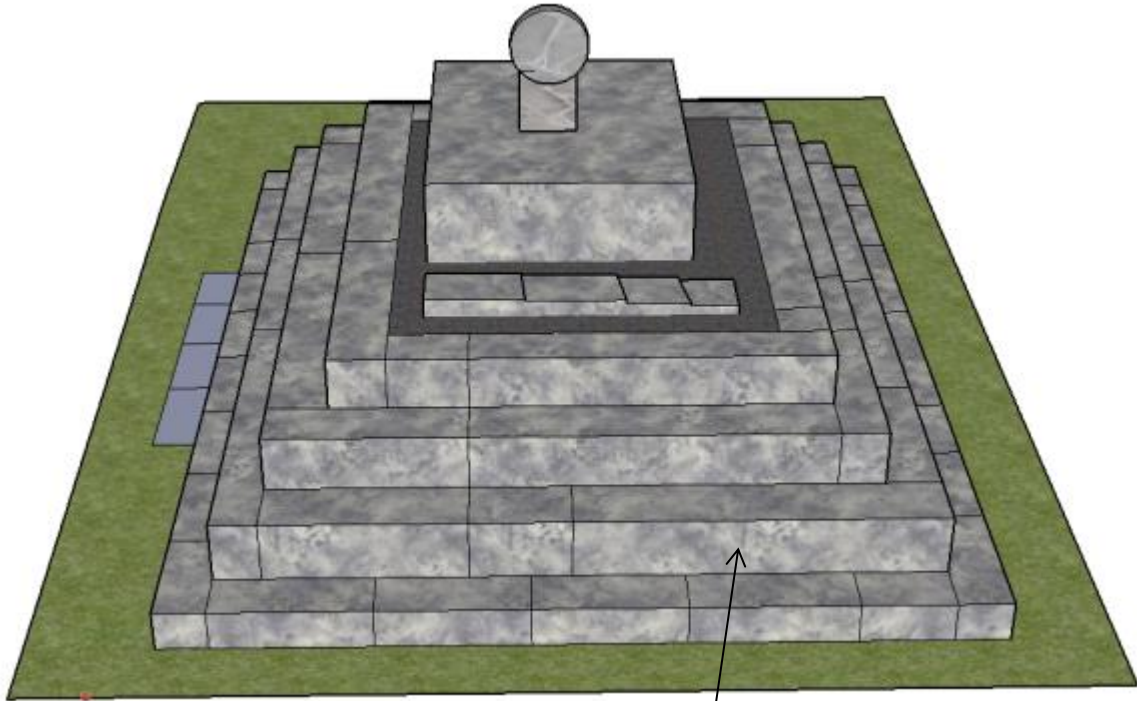
9. Granite block similar to the majority of the stones surrounding the monument, measuring 1.41m in length, Possible single drill hole on the west end of the stone, 0.22m from the western edge of the stone. Difficult to determine if this was a genuine drill hole.

15. Granite block, dressed on one side, uneven base and rear, 0.86m length, 0.43m width, 0.23m depth, no identifying features.

16 Granite block irregular shape when revealed, uneven base, longest face 0.42m in length, 0.29m depth, 0.21m depth, 0.3m height, 0.34m width, no identifying features.

Behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> tier of the stones, close to the NE corner, were the remains of a small wall 107. The wall comprised a single course of stone, constructed from a finer-looking granite than that belonging to the main body of the plinth. This section comprised four stones, with rounded edges no more than 0.3m in width and 0.2m in height. This wall was found to continue along the full length of the north side of the monument. A small piece of lime mortar was found in the gap between two of these stones but it cannot be assumed that it was *in situ*.

## East side



10.  
Possible grave slab

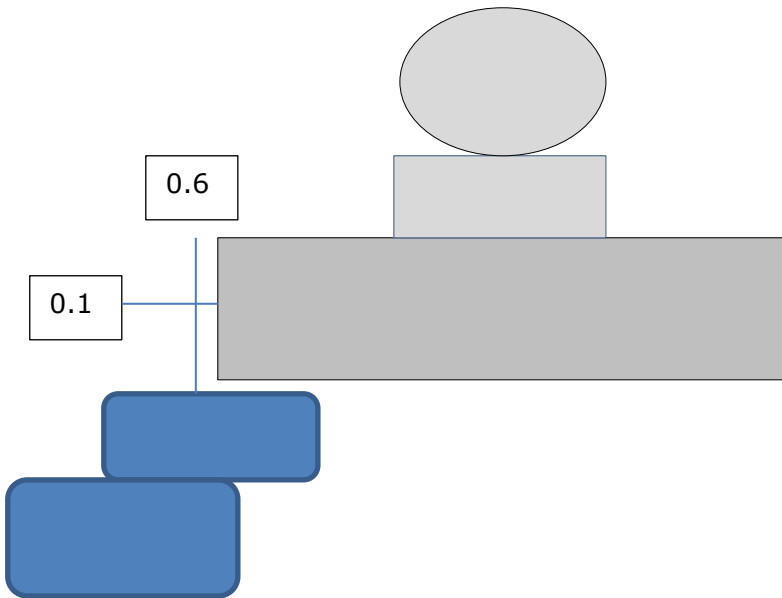
### Details of individual stones

#### Stone number

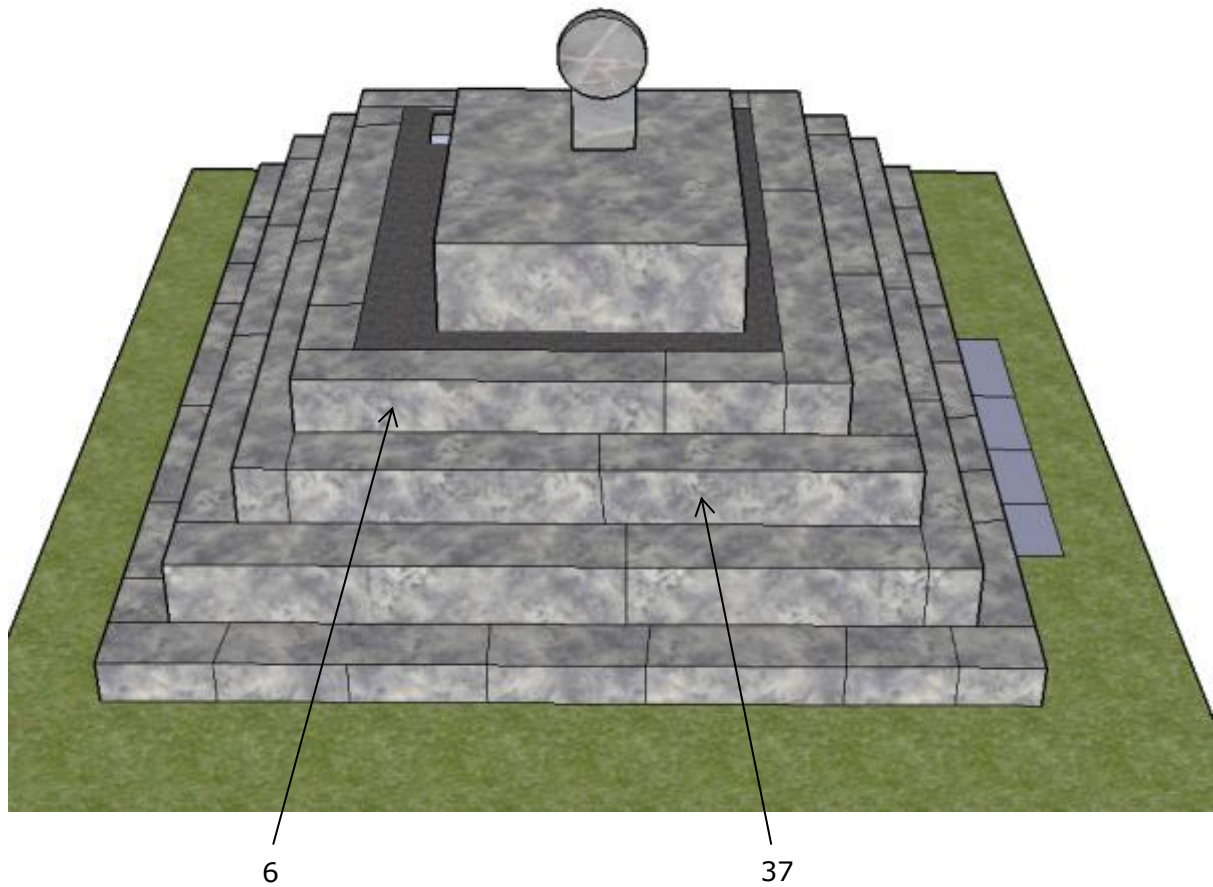
10. Granite stone. Possible grave slab. This stone, which is of a different type of granite to the rest of the plinth, may represent the remains of a grave slab. The granite has less silica or crystal content, and was worked on the top and bottom, truncated on the side which had been facing outward, and the face had been dressed. 1.45m in length, 0.35m – 0.37m width, depth approx. 0.22m – 0.27m. The undressed side had been damaged, with a large chunk of material having been removed, creating a 0.13m indent. Although it may have been a grave slab, or stone re-used from an earlier phase of building on the site (not recently quarried), there was no visible decoration. Grave marker 3 in the main text (page 18).

The fill (108) behind the outer granite stones was a jumble of modern brick, slate and broken pieces of granite, along with what appeared to be builders' sand. As the stones were removed it was ascertained that the remains of an inner wall 109 existed, of single tiers, with the remaining stones probably collapsed; the wall was built of smaller granite stones which appeared more rounded and a different type of granite. The stones in this upper tier were not keyed in tightly, with the centre appearing to have bulged out to the east. Between the old and new walls was a jumble of stones and earth. This upper wall measured approximately 1.94m in length; the stones averaged 0.3m in width and 0.1-0.15m in height. A return and possibly the remnants of a second

course were noted in the south east corner. The wall was about 0.6m below the level of the cross stone and 0.1m out. The wall below was another 0.17m below this tier.



**West side**



Stone number:

6. Block of granite 1.42m long, 0.19-0.27m wide, containing two drill holes on the south side. These were 0.15m and 0.38m from the southern edge of the stone and 0.06m and 0.03m deep respectively. Both were 0.03m in diameter.

37 Block of granite 1.4m long, containing five drill holes:

| Distance from south side     | Depth | Diameter |
|------------------------------|-------|----------|
| 0.08m                        | None  | 0.03m    |
| Distance from the north side |       |          |
| 0.17m                        | 0.06m | 0.03m    |
| 0.39m                        | 0.07m | 0.03m    |
| 0.63m                        | 0.07m | 0.03m    |
| 0.9m                         | 0.06m | 0.03m    |

**Experiment in photogrammetry pre excavation.**





## Appendix 2: Table of contexts

| Context | Stone<br>(numbers refer to the plan in Fig 17 of the report) | Description   |
|---------|--|---|
| (101)   |  | Top soil: a dark brown almost black coloured soil, varying in depth between 0.2 and 0.3m, with frequent stone inclusions comprised of broken granite and slate pieces.  |
| (102)   |  | Mid brown loose soil comprised of rab (decayed granite and clays); depth varied but appeared to exceed 0.2m. Probably re-deposited material.  |
| 103     |  | Four granite stones in line at the foot of the south side of the monument; comprised of smooth granite. Total length 2.24m; they were located 1m from the west end of the monument and 1.5m from the east. The two western stones were approximately 0.5m wide, and appeared to be under the first tier of the stone wall on the south side. Possible original steps (bottom tier).   |
| (104)   |  | Area to the south east side of the monument, a dark almost black organic soil, very soft and fine in texture, 0.2m deep.  |
| (105)   |  | A light brown soil with high clay content, common stone inclusions, plastic texture. Contained some larger pieces of local granite. Underneath (104).   |
| 106     |  | Monument comprised of approximately 49 granite stones of various sizes, the monument measures approximately 4.36m by 4.54m.   |
| 107     |  | Single course of stones, constructed from a finer type of granite, lying behind 106, this course comprised of four stones with rounded edge, no more than 0.3m wide and 0.2m high. Identified as a potential wall, it was found to continue along the full length of the north side of the monument. Probable remnants of a medieval wall or earlier step.  |
| (108)   |  | Fill between the outer granite stones 106, comprised of builder's sand, modern bricks and broken pieces of granite, this covered 109. Depth not determined.   |
| 109     |  | Inner wall or step comprised of smaller granite stones, making a wall of 1.94m long, the stones averaged 0.3m wide, and 0.1-0.15m high. A return for this wall was noted in the south east corner, and possibly the remnants of a second course. The wall was about 0.6m below the level of the pedestal for the present cross (2) on the plan and 0.1m out from the pedestal. The lower wall was another 0.17m below this tier of stone. Related to 107. |

| Context | Stone<br>(numbers<br>refer to<br>the plan in<br>Fig 17 of<br>the<br>report) | Description   |
|---------|---|---|
|         | 4   | Granite block on the north side of the monument, 4 <sup>th</sup> tier of stones, appeared to be truncated on one side, a different type of granite to the majority of the stones within the monument, 1.26m long, 0.4m wide at its widest point, 0.32m wide at each end, could possibly be the remains of a grave slab (2 in report). The base had been dressed and the curvature on the stone implied earlier working. |
|         | 6   | Granite block on the west side, 4 <sup>th</sup> tier north corner, 1.42m long, 0.19-0.27m wide, containing two drill holes on the south side. The drill holes were 0.15m and 0.38m from the southern edge of the stone and 0.06m and 0.03m deep respectively. Both were 0.03m in diameter.  |
|         | 7   | Granite block on the north side, 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier of stones, comprised of two drill holes but not possible to measure due to positioning.   |
|         | 9   | Granite block on the north side, 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier of stones, 1.41m long, contained a single drill hole on the western end of the stone, located 0.22m from the western edge, but difficult to determine of a genuine drill hole.  |
|         | 10  | A granite stone, on the east side, 2 <sup>nd</sup> tier of stones, 1.45m long, 0.35-0.37m wide, 0.22-0.27m deep. Possible grave marker (3 in report) or reworked stone from the graveyard, comprised of a different type of granite to the rest of the monument. No visible decoration.   |
|         | 15  | Granite block on the north side, 1 <sup>st</sup> tier of stones, 0.86m long, 0.43m wide, 0.23m deep, no identifying features.   |
|         | 16  | Granite block on the north side, 1 <sup>st</sup> tier of stones, 0.42m long, 0.29m deep, irregular in shape, no identifying features  |
|         | 27  | Grave slab on the south side 2 <sup>nd</sup> tier: 1.59m long, 0.37m wide, with rebates on the east and west ends 0.36m long, 0.05m indent maximum. Exhibited a ridge in the centre; on the south side a double line was also observed running along the edge, appearing to be remnants of decoration. One side has been truncated by deliberate cutting to face the slab for the monument. Grave slab 1 in the report. |
|         | 36  | Block of granite south side, 4 <sup>th</sup> tier, measuring 1.49m long, 0.25m wide (max), 0.19m wide (min), facing on the exterior, irregular shaped base and rear, the sides appeared to have been dressed. Contained four drill holes along the edge. The drill holes were 0.03m in diameter and averaged 0.05m deep.  |

| Context | Stone<br>(numbers refer to the plan in Fig 17 of the report) | Description   |
|---------|--|---|
|         | 37   | Granite block on the west side, 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier south corner, 1.4m long, containing five drill holes, averaging 0.065m deep and 0.03m in diameter.   |
|         | 38   | Block of granite on the south side, 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier, measuring 1.12m long, 0.22m deep, faced on the exterior, irregular base and rear, the sides appeared to have been faced. The face of the stone looking toward the interior of the monument contained four drill holes along the edge. The drill holes were 0.03m in diameter and averaged 0.07m deep. |
|         | 49   | Small block of granite on the south side, 1 <sup>st</sup> tier containing a single drill hole within the base of the stone, probably not associated with splitting stone but probably lifting, stone measured 0.5m long and 0.4m wide, the drill hole was 0.03m in diameter and 0.06m deep.   |

### Appendix 3: Table of small finds

| Find | Context     | Description   |
|------|-------------|---|
| SF1  | (104)/(105) | Sherd of Staffordshire Ware.  |
| SF2  | (104)/(105) | Sherd of unglazed pottery   |
| SF3  | (101)/(102) | Piece of pottery  |
| SF4  | (104)       | Four pieces of slate representing the remnants of a headstone with engraving. On one piece, the remains of letters reading 'Here Lies...'. Probably 19 <sup>th</sup> century in origin. |

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