



Some of the Committee members who attended this event

Visit to St Keverne - Saturday 17 October 2009

A group of members met in St Keverne Square on a beautiful sunny afternoon and were given a tour of the Church, together with other local points of interest, by the St Keverne Local History Society.

We entered the churchyard through the lych gate and discovered that the Church (grade 1 listed) dates from the 13th Century with further additions in the 15th although records show that there had been a place of worship here since around 600 AD. Within the churchyard we were able to see a number of graves and memorials relating to various shipwrecks on the Manacles Rocks. In particular, the SS Mohegan from 1898, known locally as St Keverne's Titanic on which 98 people drowned including the father of the dancer Isadora Duncan.

Another memorial site viewed was that of HMS Primrose lost in 1809. Adjacent to the lych gate sits a 32 pound cannon from this vessel. Looking along the side of the church next to the North door which is part Norman we observed a squint window which would have looked out from the rood

loft stairway. Next we moved around to the West door alongside which are shields of local families. The main door of the church today is on the south side and high above the door we saw a stone carving possibly of St. Keverne.

Within the church a number of interesting features were seen including a mural of St Christopher dating from about 1480, the Armada chest dating from about 1700, previously used for storing church records and the stained glass Mohegan window over the altar dedicated to the victims who drowned. Walking around the church the architectural changes that have occurred over the centuries are clearly visible notably the stone pillars probably made from French sourced stone, the restored waggon roof and bell tower. Our attention was drawn to marks on one of the pillars reputedly made by musket shots fired by Roundheads after a local civil war battle.

Outside the church we paused to read the memorial plaque to the two leaders of the Cornish Rebellion in 1497. This started as a protest about taxation and resulted in 15,000 people marching on London. Eventually 5,000 of them met the King's forces on Blackheath and were overwhelmed. The two leaders Michael Joseph, the Smithy from St. Keverne and Thomas Flamank, the Bodmin Lawyer were captured and interviewed personally by King Henry VII. Inevitably, they were then hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn but, interestingly, the King did not mete out further severe punishments, merely fining those villages that had assisted the Rebellion.

In the square itself are two features of interest - a War Memorial to the dead of both world wars and a restored finger signpost. No doubt this latter feature, together with the post box and telephone box nearby, will be included in our forthcoming roadside artefacts survey. Finally we walked 200m up the hill out of the village to view the statue memorial of the previously mentioned Cornish Rebellion leaders. The statue is by Terence Coventry and sits on a plinth of local quarried stone. It was commissioned in 1997 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the rebellion. This was a most interesting visit and our thanks are due to members of the St Keverne Local History Society for kindly arranging this. It is hoped that further similar visits to other villages on the Lizard will take place in the future.

Lynda & Geoffrey Blackman

Short but Sweet

(see photograph at bottom of page 2 in the main Newsletter)

This describes our most recent educational walk, so my write-up will follow the same pattern. Was that a sigh of relief I heard? On Tuesday 27 September, a band of happy LPHT members set out with archaeologist James Gossip to view the Bronze Age settlement at Kynance Gate. There were almost as many dogs as people in our party, and all were very well behaved, if a little exuberant; the dogs likewise.

It is thought that the settlement dates from the early Bronze Age, about 2,000 BC, and was then abandoned for an Age or so, until that of the Iron, when the settlers became more particular about the appearance of their clothes. James gave us an interesting potted history of some of the surrounding area, including the windmill, already described as ancient in 1635, and derelict by 1829. This was the hideout for The Windmill Gang - sheep stealers, murderers and other undesirables from The Lizard. *Plus ça change*, muttered some cynic in the background, but we moved on.

It was probably nothing to do with any gangs, but a handy gorse fire first exposed the Kynance Gate site to local gaze in 1896, and it is thanks to the interest and efforts of Ivor Thomas, Headteacher of Landewednack School, that so much work was done there from 1952 for several seasons. This has been added to by some recent gorse clearance by the Cornish Ancient Sites Protection Network. The stone bases of several hut circles are visible, and these would have been topped with timbers – probably hewn at the Helford and shipped here – with reed or turf roofs. The presence of hearths indicates that some kind of metal work was carried out, while livestock would have been grazed on the surrounding land.

We cannot say why the Bronze chaps chose this site in particular. There might have been a spiritual basis, or a meteorological one. The weather was warmer and wetter in those times, and there are many remains of small field systems to be seen in sheltered parts of this coast and downs. But it is believed to have formed a summer residence only, perhaps the earliest evidence of the Lizard tourist trade – second homes, as another wit remarked!

Several artefacts from Kynance Gate can be seen in Helston Museum, and more digs are planned on the site in the near future (of the archaeological, not the student, kind). James will, we hope, keep us up to date on events here, so keep your eyes peeled and dog leads at the ready for another Kynance amble some time.

Jane Grierson