

# CHYSAUSTER COURTYARD HOUSE SETTLEMENT

SW 472 350 [OS Maps Explorer 102; Landranger 203]

## LOCATION

Chysauster Courtyard House Settlement is one of the best-preserved sites in Cornwall, and an excellent example of a prehistoric village. It is in the care of English Heritage (closed in winter), who produce an informative and detailed leaflet about the site. There is an entrance charge.

## ACCESS

From Penzance take the B3311 road towards St.Ives. After about 2 miles at Badger's Cross take a left hand fork and follow the road around to the car park at Chysuaster. From here a path leads up to the site. Disabled access.

## DESCRIPTION

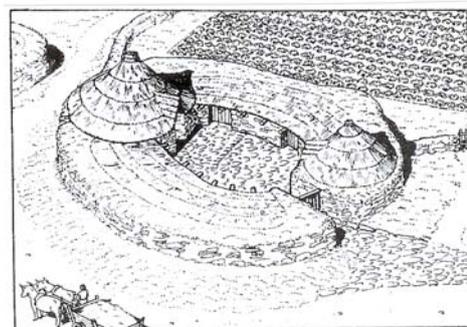
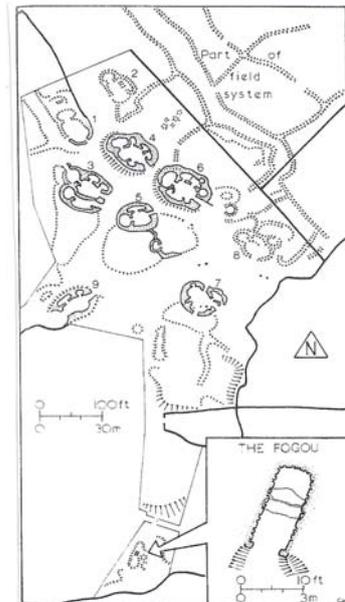
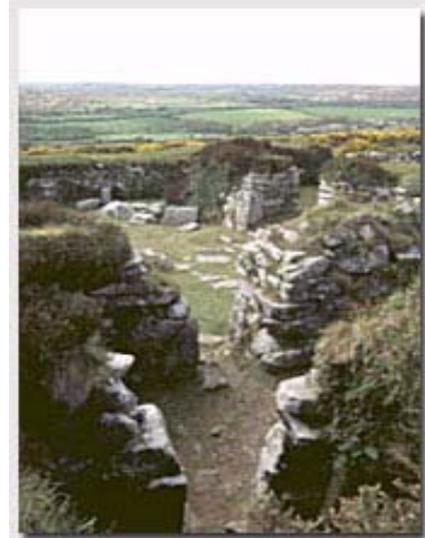
Courtyard House Settlements are a uniquely West Penwith form of dwelling, which began to appear at the end of the Iron Age (about 500 BC) and continued to be occupied until the 4th-5th centuries AD (Romano-Ceornish period). Although there was doubtless an earlier settlement (which may have been more extensive) at Chysauster, the village as seen today probably dates from the later period of the 2nd-3rd centuries AD. There are eight houses remaining, forming two rows with a winding village street between them, and a ninth house to the SW. Although there are individual variations, each house consists of an entrance leading into a courtyard (which may have been unroofed) from which fans out a number of rooms, usually three. These consist of a round room (opposite the entrance), a long narrow room (to the right of the entrance) and sometimes a small round room as well. As at Carn Euny [see downloadable leaflet] and other Courtyard House Settlements, there was a fogou that now lies to the south of the houses, but was originally contained within the settlement. It was recorded in 1861 as running for at least 50ft up the hill, but is now has only 15ft left, and is not accessible. Outside the settlement there was an extensive field system, but much of this was destroyed by the landowner in 1984.

## SIGNIFICANT FINDS

The bulk of the material excavated from the houses consisted of pottery, but there were also fragments of slate and a large number of water-worn pebbles, mostly of cream-coloured quartz, which had been brought to the village, and may have had ritual significance. In 2003 a tiny (2cm across) copper alloy spoon was discovered, which may have been used for eating shell-fish.

**Go to page 2 for details of other local ancient sites  
PLEASE TREAT THIS SITE WITH RESPECT & LEAVE  
NO LITTER OR OFFERINGS.**

**IF YOU FIND ANY DAMAGE OR VANDALISM PLEASE REPORT IT AT THE GUARDIAN'S  
HUT ON SITE, OR PHONE 01736-787186 OR 787522**



*Plan of site & reconstruction of House  
(no.6) [c] Craig Weatherhill*

# OTHER SITES NEAR CHYSAUSTER SETTLEMENT

## **MULFRA QUOIT** SW 4518 3536

**LOCATION & ACCESS** From Chysauster continue along the road westwards until it joins the Newmill-Treen (Gurnards Head) road. Turn right (north) and drive for about a mile. Where a side road turns right there is a small grassy area opposite (on the left) to park. From here take the track going west and after a few hundred yards one at right angles going south. This climbs Mulfra Hill, and just over the summit there is Mulfra Quoit. Lovely views over Mounts Bay.

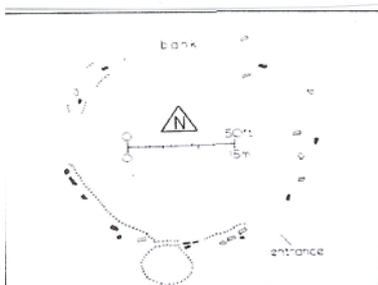
**DESCRIPTION & MEANING** Mulfra Quoit is similar in size and construction to Chûn Quoit [*available as a downloadable leaflet*] but is in a more ruined state. Only three of the original four upright stones remain and the 2.9m (9½ft) capstone has slipped off. Like Chûn it was originally contained within a mound, no trace of which remains. For the probable meaning and significance of Quoits see any of the downloadable leaflets on Chûn, Zennor or Lanyon Quoits.



*To visit the cleared Mulfra Courtyard House Settlement [SW 454 350] continue on the path down the other side of the hill, which becomes a track that leads to the extensive settlement. Nearby, at Bodrifty there are more remains of huts and a reconstructed Iron Age house (ask permission at Bodrifty farm to view).*

## **TREEN COMMON CIRCLE ENCLOSURE** SW 4446 3666

**LOCATION & ACCESS** From Mulfra Quoit return to the road and continue northwards for ½ mile (informal parking beside road). Visible on the horizon to the west are the remains of Treen Common circle.



[c] Craig Weatherhill

### **DE- SCRIP- TION &**

**MEANING** This site is something of an enigma. It is not known for certain whether it is an unusually large Bronze Age circle or perhaps an Iron Age settlement round or pound.

It consists of an irregular, elliptical ring of 14 upright and numerous fallen stones, with a diameter of 30m-33m (99ft-110ft). It is clearly prehistoric, as it stands in the middle of what is now an indiscernible prehistoric field system. A midsummer sunrise alignment in a notch over Zennor hill when seen from the circle has been suggested for the site.

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