

ZENNOR QUOIT

SW 4688 3801 [OS Maps Explorer 102; Landranger 203]

LOCATION

Zennor lies about 2 miles west of St.Ives on the B3306 St.Ives to St.Just road. The Quoit lies on the West Penwith moors above.

ACCESS

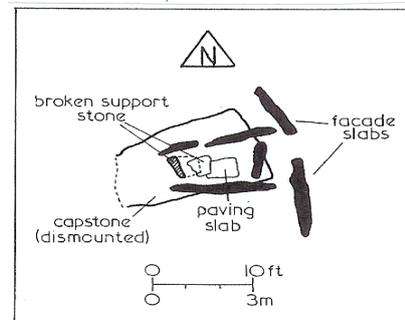
From Zennor drive eastwards towards St.Ives for about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile as the road climbs towards a house on the summit called Eagle's Nest. Just past here there is a small layby where a car or two may be parked. Walk back up to Eagle's Nest, and opposite the house a track leads up on to the Moors.

Where the track divides, take the left hand fork towards a ruined (mine) building. Opposite this ruin, a smaller track heads west towards Zennor Quoit which is visible a few hundred yards further on.



DESCRIPTION

Although now in a ruined state, with its huge capstone having fallen off, Zennor Quoit is still an impressive monument. Quoits (also called Dolmens or Cromlechs) are probably the earliest of any of the prehistoric monuments remaining, dating from the early Neolithic period (3500-2500 BC), and were constructed by the early farmers who had recently settled and begun to plant crops and raise cattle. Each group of farmers occupied their own area or territory, and on high ground nearby would construct one of these Quoits. They may originally, or subsequently, have been covered by an earth mound, but the capstone itself may have remained uncovered. Zennor is slightly different from Chûn & Mulfra Quoits [*also available as downloadable leaflets*] in that it originally had two large facade stones, forming an antechamber to the monument, which may have been used for rituals. The chamber behind is 2.4m (8ft) high, and the whole structure once stood within a barrow 12.8m (42ft) in diameter. The capstone is 5.5m (18ft) long, 2.9m (9½ft) wide and weighs 9.3 tons. Stones standing to the E of the monument are the remains of a more modern (19th C) cow shed.



[c] Craig Weatherhill

FOLKLORE & LEGEND

Legend claims that any stone removed from the Quoit will find its way back overnight. This was put to the test in 1861 when a farmer who attempted to break up the Quoit to build the cow shed mentioned above was prevented from doing so, not by the mysterious powers of the stones, but by the antiquarian vicar W.C.Borlase who bribed him to leave the site alone!

PURPOSE AND MEANING

Zennor is one of a number of quoits (approximately 8) remaining in West Penwith. These sites were probably designed as repositories for the bones of the dead, whose bodies may have been laid out on the capstones for the carrion birds to remove the flesh (a practice known as excarnation). Yet it would be a mistake to think of these monuments simply as 'burial chambers'. The bone evidence from other places indicates that the disarticulated bones of a number of individuals may have been placed inside, and from time to time some bones were removed and were replaced by others. We may perhaps rather think of these sites as places where the tribe (or the shamans of the tribe) would go to consult with the spirits of their dead ancestors in trance journeys and altered states of consciousness.

Go to page 2 for details of other ancient sites in the area.

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IF YOU FIND ANY DAMAGE OR VANDALISM PLEASE PHONE 01736-787186 OR 787522

OTHER SITES NEAR TO ZENNOR QUOIT

ZENNOR MERMAID CARVING SW 4849 3850

LOCATION & ACCESS The mermaid carving is in Zennor Church. Directions to Zennor as on p.1 of this leaflet. There is a public car park in Zennor a few yards from the Church, and busses also run to Zennor from Penzance and from St.Ives & St.Just [summer only].

DESCRIPTION & MEANING The carving (which may be over 600 years old) is on a bench end in the church, and alludes to the legend of the choirboy Matthew Trewella who was tempted away by a mermaid to join her in her home beneath the waves. She may be a version of an earlier legend of the Breton princess Asenora, who was cast adrift on the ocean and eventually landed up in Ireland. She became St.Senara and later she returned to Brittany via

Cornwall where she founded the church at Zennor. Mermaid, saint and sea creature seem inextricably intertwined and may all be aspects of an other-world, sea Goddess shape-shifter from prehistoric times. Her Goddess associations are

acknowledged by a notice in the Church above the carving that identifies her with the Greek sea-Goddess Aphrodite.



TRENDRINE HILL BARROWS SW 4788 3875

LOCATION & ACCESS From the pathway to Zennor Quoit [see p.1 of this leaflet] when you reach the ruined mine house, turn left and head for Sperris Croft above. To the S of Sperris Croft are the ruined remains of **Sperris Quoit** [SW 4709 3825] which are worth a look. Then continue along this narrow path in a NE direction, past an Iron Age hut settlement, until you reach the top of a ridge ahead. As you come up over the ridge, the remains of two large barrows, the Trendrine Hill round barrows, become visible.



DESCRIPTION & MEANING The largest of the two barrows is a great cairn of stones 19m (62ft) across and 2.5m (8½ft) high, now topped by an OS triangulation pillar. To the south of this is another large mound [photo above] which is 14m (46ft) in diameter and 2m (6½ ft) high with a kerb of large stones, which include natural outcrops. Parts of an inner retaining wall are also visible as are the remains of a central cist.

The view from here is magnificent, looking directly across to the rounded shape of Trevalgan Hill (known locally as Buttermilk Hill) and beyond to the great broad sweep of the Atlantic ocean. Trevalgan Hill is in a NE direction from the Trendrine Hill barrows, indicating that the barrows were purposely located here to view the sun rising out of the sea and over the hill at the midsummer solstice sunrise, a fusion of the powers of the sun God/dess at its zenith with the spirits of the dead ancestors from the barrows.

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