



# ENGLISH HERITAGE

## SOUTH WEST REGION

2011

### **Tregeseal stone circle Scheduled Monument**

(Two large regular stone circles 290m north east of Hailglower Farm)

**Heritage Asset Unique Identifier 1004493/Old County Number CO305**

**Parish: St Just**

**County: Cornwall**

### **Management recommendations following reports of damage to the monument**

#### **1. Summary**

Following the re-introduction of grazing onto Carnyorth Common in 2009 there have been repeated reports of damage to the stone circle, in the form of loosening of the stones.

Individual stones have become loose, to varying degrees and for a variety of reasons, and some of those stones have been the subject of simple, temporary re-stabilisation. Historically loose or fallen stones have been re-erected at various times since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and there is unlikely to have been any recent damage to undisturbed archaeological deposits, either by destabilisation or temporary repair.

Tregeseal stone circle is a monument of national importance, equally it is an iconic monument of great importance to the Cornish people, pagans and visitors alike; and the loose stones are a matter of great concern to all.

The reported damage is not believed to pose a threat to the buried archaeology of the stone circle, and although it is a threat to the visual integrity of the site, loose stones can easily be stabilised. Clearly, any threat to a scheduled monument is a cause for concern and it would not be acceptable for the current situation to continue without seeking to address the problems.

The current management regime appears to be the most sustainable way of managing the site. However, in order to minimise the risk of future destabilisation of stones a number of safeguards and conditions should be attached to the grazing regime, in addition to physical works intended to reduce the grazing pressure on the immediate area of the stone circle. Stone 10 should be subject to more permanent consolidation, and the modifications to the management regime should be monitored to gauge their impact.

29 QUEEN SQUARE BRISTOL BS1 4ND

Telephone 0117 975 0700 Facsimile 0117 975 0701

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

*Please note that English Heritage operates an access to information policy.*

*Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available*



## 2. Designation and Ownership

The monument known as Tregeseal stone circle is designated as a Scheduled Monument under the terms of the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*. It was originally scheduled in the late 1930s, confirming that the monument is of national importance.

Designation under the 1979 Act prohibits certain activities or works that may be considered damaging to the monument (Section 2). It requires an application to be made for *Scheduled Monument Consent* (SMC), in order to undertake such activities. The granting of SMC is discretionary and contravention of the Act may result in prosecution. There are no statutory powers with regard to the maintenance or upkeep of Scheduled Monuments.

The monument is in private ownership.

## 3. Background and Issues

Although the stones and general layout are undoubtedly ancient in origin, Tregeseal stone circle, as it appears today, is largely the product of more recent restorations. Of the 19 stones that form today's circle, more than two-thirds are believed to have been re-erected in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

More recently, the monument has suffered by being overgrown with vegetation, which was cleared by the *Cornwall Ancient Sites Protection Network* (CASPN) and the *British Trust for Conservation Volunteers* (BTCV) in 2004. Vegetation has continued to be managed by a combination of hand cutting and strimming, supplemented since 2009 by animal grazing.

However, since the re-introduction of grazing in 2009, as part of Natural England's *Heathland, Environment, Agriculture, Tourism, Heritage Project* (HEATH), there have been repeated reports of loose stones at the monument (see Cornwall Council's document 2010R107, *Tregeseal Stone Circle; stabilisation of stones and vegetation clearance*, Preston-Jones. A, 2010). The HEATH project also installed fencing around the Common in order to allow the re-introduction of grazing.

The 1979 Act instigated the collection of management records for scheduled monuments, and the 1984 management record for Tregeseal reports an 'uprooted' stone 'roughly replaced with loose rocks around it', while locals report that another stone fell and was uprighted at the same time. The report for 1996 indicates that this situation remained unchanged.

In July 2009 it was reported that five stones were loose. These were stones E, 10, 8, the northernmost, un-numbered stone (herein referred to as 'X'), and the north-north western un-numbered stone (herein referred to as 'Y') (see plan). In September of the same year, four of the stones reported loose (E, 10, X, and Y) were stabilised by tamping lime mortar enhanced 'rab' into the gaps at the base of the stones. The

29 QUEEN SQUARE BRISTOL BS1 4ND

Telephone 0117 975 0700 Facsimile 0117 975 0701

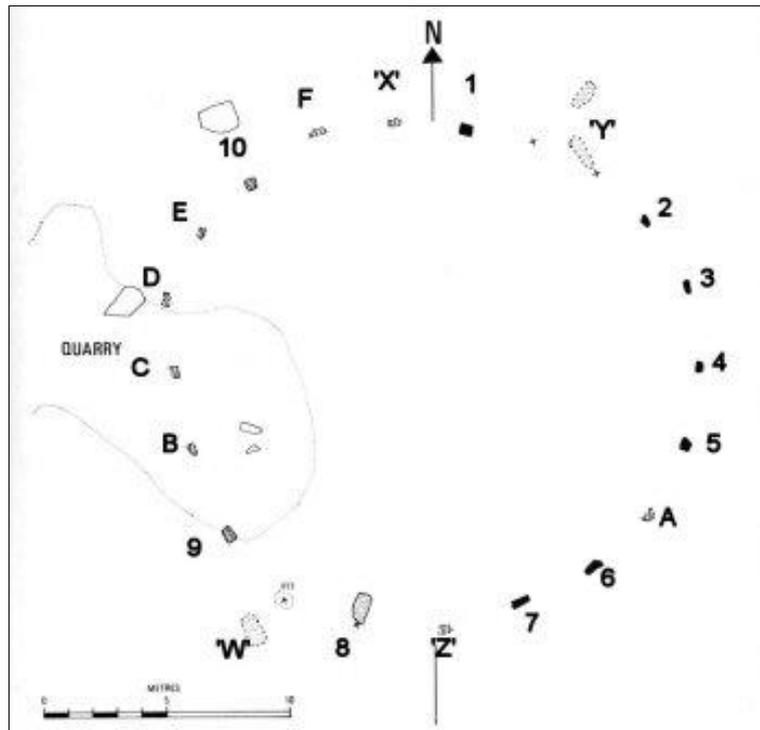
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Please note that English Heritage operates an access to information policy.

Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available



movement of the fifth stone was marginal and it was not felt necessary to stabilise it at that point. These works were undertaken by Cornwall Council under the umbrella of their *Monument Management Scheme*.



*Plan of eastern Tregeseal stone Circle from John Barnatt, 1980, Prehistoric Cornwall: the Ceremonial monuments, 163.*

*In this plan, stones which are original and in situ are shown in solid black. Stones which have been re-erected are shown with a solid black outline and cross-hatched. Stones which have been introduced to the site to replace missing ones are shown with a dashed outline and are cross-hatched. Fallen stones are stippled.*

*Stones 8, 'X' and, 'Y' were set up by local people subsequent to this plan.*

*Stones 'W', 'X', 'Y', and 'Z' were previously unnumbered on Barnatt's plan.*

*Note the quarry (tin streaming) on the west. Although not shown on this plan, there is further 'quarrying' to the east of the circle.*

Between 2009 and 2011 there have been over 12 reports of loose stones from various sources. Site investigation has shown that these relate to seven individual stones. Two of these stones have had no subsequent stabilisation works and four have been subject to temporary stabilisation. Stone 10 appears most susceptible to damage and has been stabilised four times.

There have also been reports of a serious crack appearing in one of the stones. This crack, the result of natural weathering of a geological fault, is clearly historic in nature and has been in existence for some time, probably over a century.

## Management

29 QUEEN SQUARE BRISTOL BS1 4ND

Telephone 0117 975 0700 Facsimile 0117 975 0701

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Please note that English Heritage operates an access to information policy.

Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available



As noted above, vegetation at the monument is currently managed through hand cutting by the volunteers of CASPN, and grazing by cattle. This has ensured the monument's continuing improved presentation and access for an increasing number of visitors.

The monument is currently grazed by longhorn cattle, a rare breed particularly suited to conservation grazing due to their placid temperament. Although they are large and could be seen as intimidating they are, in fact, a gentle and docile breed. They are also one of the largest breeds of cattle used for conservation grazing.

At Tregeseal the introduction of grazing, primarily for the management of coastal heathland vegetation serves to supplement the work of CASPN and provide an alternative longer term management option. The cattle are not intended to 'clear' the monument, merely to slow re-growth or, ideally, maintain the status quo between CASPN visits. Whilst cattle will eat bracken and gorse, it is their trampling, and the subsequent weakening, of bracken which is often of most benefit to bracken control. However, the grazing is primarily intended to provide ecological benefits and is not a specific management element introduced for the monument, which is a small part of the larger Common.

### **Causes of Recent Instability of the Stones**

Whilst there is undoubtedly a link between the re-introduction of grazing and the more frequent loosening of the stones, cattle are not the only cause of instability.

It is clear that the cattle congregate within and around the stone circle and do, indeed, use the stones as rubbing posts. A lack of a wider area of cleared vegetation around the stones is a contributory factor to the cattle being drawn to Tregeseal stone circle, as is the lack alternative rubbing posts. It is also likely that the size of the breed employed is a contributory factor.

The location of the stones that are repeatedly worst affected is also a factor. Stone 10 lies adjacent to the main path into the centre of the circle and is often the first stone reached by visitors. Visitors lean against, run around, and climb on these stones (stones 10 and F) more than others. Visitor numbers can be heavy at the monument, with 47 counted during a two hour period on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

Ground conditions also appear to contribute to the instability of some stones. When the ground is dry there is a degree of shrinkage that can leave the base of a stone slightly loose. Where increased awareness amongst the public has led to well intentioned, but *ad hoc*, looseness testing, it is likely that this may have exacerbated the issue; as may climbing on the stones. It is likely that many of the monolithic monuments on these soils display a degree of temporary instability at certain times, although most will go unrecorded.

Finally, it may be of significance that the loose stones are amongst those that have been re-erected. The method of erection is unknown but, it is likely that they were merely stood up in shallow scrapes and had soil compacted around their bases. It is notable that the stone which is most prone to instability (10) is also one of the tallest in the circle – probably because it has been re-set but is not buried deeply enough in the ground.

29 QUEEN SQUARE BRISTOL BS1 4ND

Telephone 0117 975 0700 Facsimile 0117 975 0701  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Please note that English Heritage operates an access to information policy.  
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available



## Solutions

Previous repairs have proved unsatisfactory for the stones that are most vulnerable; however, they do appear to have been sufficient for the others.

Although the stones have been re-erected, intrusive consolidation does present a threat to any undisturbed archaeological deposits and for this reason it is proposed that stones not subject to repeated or severe de-stabilisation be consolidated using the previous method of tamping a rab/lime mortar mixture into any gaps between the stones and the surrounding soil.

For those stones subject to repeated de-stabilisation (Stone 10 and possibly D, E or F) a more permanent solution will be required for reasons of both presentation and health and safety.

A number of options are available, including creating a concrete base, either off site or on, in which to anchor the base of the stone or, a granite base. In this instance it is felt that the best option would be the recording and removal of the stone under archaeological supervision, with archaeological excavation of a suitable hole in which to place a granite base stone. This base will have been worked to allow the upright stone to sit securely within it, or fixed to it by some form of pin. The base stone would be installed at a depth sufficient to allow a suitable covering of soil.

The ongoing management of vegetation on monuments is usually best achieved by hand, often with the aid of mechanical tools such as strimmers and flails. Limitations on resources mean this work is often dependant on volunteers being able to dedicate their time and effort to the monument's management; and clearly, where possible, one must look to supplementary strategies to provide long term sustainable management options.

Grazing is usually the preferred, most sustainable option for the management of vegetation on field monuments, and it works successfully on many similar upland sites. Ideally a mixed regime of sheep and cattle is desirable; however, either will suffice given good stewardship.

The options for modifying the existing grazing regime range from the use of smaller breeds, which will exert less pressure on the stones, to the complete removal of grazing from the monument itself.

Since the primary reason for grazing is not the historic environment but bio-diversity, Natural England is reluctant to withdraw grazing from the whole of Carnyorth Common because of the relative small area of the stones. It is not possible to fully exclude Tregeseal from the Common without the installation of fencing. Sitting on the edge of heath land, the setting of the monument would be adversely affected by any form of permanent fencing or division from the rest of the heath, and this is not considered acceptable on landscape grounds. Complete removal of grazing from the stones would also place the sole reliance on managing the vegetation within the monument on volunteers.

The use of smaller animals may be a solution. The grazier has experimented with grazing with Dartmoor ponies, which are lighter and may present less of a threat to

29 QUEEN SQUARE BRISTOL BS1 4ND

Telephone 0117 975 0700 Facsimile 0117 975 0701  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Please note that English Heritage operates an access to information policy.  
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available



the monument. Although this did not work out as well as expected at first it is understood that there will be a further attempt to do so in the coming year. The use of smaller cattle is under investigation.

Although some grazing is desirable to keep down the vegetation within and around the stones of the circle, the animals could be encouraged to graze a wider area and to use alternative stones as rubbing posts. Clearing a wider area of heavier undergrowth from around the stones would enable the animals to graze more widely, and alternative rubbing posts could be provided away from the stones to encourage the animals not to congregate on the monument. There are small, un-cleared areas within the stones themselves, and removing scrub from these areas might also help disperse the cattle.

Ground conditions also appear to play a part in the stability of the stones, and grazing could be removed from the monument during key periods. Likewise, awareness could be raised amongst members of the public of the potential harm caused by climbing on the stones.

#### 4. Recommendations

##### Consolidation

- The stones that are only marginally loose at times and those which have not been subject to repeated stabilisation works should be stabilised with a rab/lime mix where appropriate and monitored. *Reason – to minimise the need to disturb buried remains.*
- Stone 10 and possibly one or more of stones D, E, F (or others as deemed necessary), should be stabilised by the insertion of a stable granite base. This base should be fitted below the current ground surface. *Reason – to limit future de-stabilisation and for visitor safety.*
- The above stabilisation shall only be undertaken subject to the conditions of a suitable Written Statement of Investigation agreed in advance with English Heritage. *Reason – to mitigate against archaeological damage.*
- Stabilisation works may require Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC).

##### Grazing

The current management regime, combining regular hand cutting of vegetation by CASPN, supplemented by grazing/trampling by cattle should continue; however, only if subject to agreement of, and funding for, the following conditions from Natural England and the grazier.

- The semi-enclosure in which the monument sits should be fully cleared of vegetation. *Reason – to extend the area available for grazing and reduce pressure on the monument.*
- The areas of heath immediately adjacent to the monument, bounded by the walls to west and east and track way to north, should be cleared of vegetation. *Reason – to extend the area available for grazing and reduce pressure on the monument.*
- Suitable rubbing posts should be provided in the extended cleared area to the north of the monument. These should be in the form of appropriately sized boundary posts, located on a boundary and appropriately marked on either

29 QUEEN SQUARE BRISTOL BS1 4ND

Telephone 0117 975 0700 Facsimile 0117 975 0701  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Please note that English Heritage operates an access to information policy.  
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available



side with the respective ownership. *Reason – an attempt to provide additional rubbing posts for the cattle and relieve pressure on the monument.*

- The grazier should investigate the possibility of alternative, smaller breeds of cattle/animals. *Reason – to lessen the chances of damage to the stones.*
- The grazier should closely monitor the condition of the ground, the stones and, the location of the grazing animals and remove them from the monument if conditions require (too wet or too dry). Cattle so removed should not return until ground conditions at the monument are acceptable. It may be necessary to introduce temporary electric fencing or hurdles to permit this. *Reason – to limit the possibility of cattle de-stabilising stones.*
- The grazier will inform English Heritage of any instability immediately. *Reason – to allow English Heritage to maintain an accurate record of instability and to monitor the ongoing effectiveness of the conditions.*

## General

- CASPN should be supported and their work on the monument acknowledged.
- It is proposed that these conditions be monitored for twelve months and reviewed at the end of that period. *Reason – to assess the success of the conditions and make any necessary modifications or to cease the trial.*
- Members of the public should be discouraged from *ad hoc* checking of the stones' stability, or climbing on them. This may be achieved through a suitable press campaign. *Reason – to limit the likelihood of unintentional de-stabilisation and inform the public*
- A strategy for the presentation and interpretation of the monument should be investigated. *Reason – to inform visitors understanding of the history and re-creation of the monument.*

N Russell  
Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments  
Cornwall  
November 2011

29 QUEEN SQUARE BRISTOL BS1 4ND

Telephone 0117 975 0700 Facsimile 0117 975 0701  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Please note that English Heritage operates an access to information policy.  
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available

