

Annex 3

THE TINNERS' WAY (OLD ST IVES ROAD; WATERSHED WAY), PENWITH, CORNWALL

THE ANTIQUITY OF THE TRACKWAY

IN RECENT YEARS, hints of scepticism have emerged with regard to the age of the Tinnners' Way. By way of example, in 2008, the Historic Environment Service of Cornwall Council produced a foldout leaflet entitled *The Past in the Present*, which specifically mentions it as simply "Track", and describes it as follows:

Part of a route between St Just and St Ives made up of footpaths, bridleways and minor roads. It passes close to several prehistoric monuments and settlements on the downs and has been variously claimed as a prehistoric track and a (sic) historic route for tin and copper from the St Just area to St Ives; in fact, minerals were generally shipped to Penzance. People have certainly used tracks across the downs for thousands of years but, as in this case, today's routes were only confined to a particular line by enclosure of adjacent ground during the 18th or 19th centuries.

This description, in an otherwise excellent production, pays scant regard to the available evidence, and misleads by omission.

Although much tin from the Penwith mining areas was indeed transported to the Chyandour smelting house at Penzance for processing and shipping, by no means all of it was. One branch of the trackway, from Lady Downs to Heather Lane, led directly to the (surviving) Roseangrouse smelting house adjacent to the Lamb and Flag public house, which operated from 1715 to 1883 and was subsequently transported to Hayle Harbour for shipping to Wales and points further northward. It is also recorded that Welsh coal was brought back along the trackway as fuel for engine house boilers. The occasional occurrence of distinctive Welsh slate on the roofs of 18th and 19th century buildings in Penwith also attest to Welsh imports being shipped into Hayle and transported onwards.

In 1870, one of William Bottrell's tales mentions the Roseangrouse smelting house and the fact that tin was brought there on horses and mules. It is a surprise that the Historic Environment Service should have missed this important evidence.

Also, the description pays no heed to the fact that the trackway is clearly shown on Joel Gascoyne's 1699 map of Cornwall, surveyed and drawn before any of the cited 18th and 19th century enclosures took place. One such enclosure, south of Carn Galva and bordering the northern side of the trackway, is clearly shown on the first Ordnance Survey one-inch map of 1813, the survey for which was carried out c.1795 (the layout of prehistoric field systems, as shown by the accompanying plan, also appear to have paid full regard to the trackway's route). The track, in its entirety, is shown on the 1813 map, and several other areas of enclosure are clearly shown as bordering on it.

Evidence from the Late Medieval period (1066-1500 AD)

The evidence would rather suggest that the locations for enclosure boundaries set up in the 18th and 19th centuries (and earlier) were governed by the prior existence and contemporary use of the trackway, as were the positioning of parish boundaries in the 12th century or before, strongly suggesting that the trackway was in existence and use at that time. These faithfully follow the original route line for a distance of nine kilometres, from the Boslow Stone in the west to Amalveor Downs in the east. Parish boundaries also follow the line of the main offshoot track from Bishop's Head and Foot towards Mount's Bay for a distance of three and a half kilometres.

Land ownerships and the parish tithes due from them, extended to each side of the trackway (which was edged with stone and earth hedges or banks for at least part of its overall length). The trackway itself was "no man's land", i.e. free from private ownership in order to ensure unrestricted thoroughfare.

Evidence from the Early Medieval period (410-1066 AD)

Moving further back in time, inscribed stones of the Early Medieval period (5th to 10th centuries AD) were set up in either of two specific locations: within Early Celtic (Columban) Celtic church enclosures; or beside established and important routeways.

At least two inscribed stones were erected beside the route of the Tinnars' Way: Men Scryfa ('stone of writing'), also called Men Scryfys ('written stone') stands where the trackway splits into two parallel routes, one at a higher level than the other, before reuniting at Pella Corner, 3.5 kilometres further to the south-west. The clear inscription etched into the northern face of Men Scryfa has been dated to the middle third of the 6th century.

The Boslow Stone stands 4.2 kilometres south-west of Men Scryfa at a crossroads of trackways described by Professor Charles Thomas (perhaps the outstanding authority on post-Roman Britain) as: *the intersection of two trackways of prehistoric origin*. This stone, in its original setting and still marking the grave of a man believed to have been a priest, is dated to the final third of the 7th century AD. Moreover, the Celtic name on the stone TAETVERA (Teithuere), thought to be a name "taken in religion", translates as "exalter of the journey". The relevance of this name to the grave site beside an important early routeway cannot go unremarked. Indeed, its name given in 1613 as Crowze East (*crow's Ust*, 'St Just's cross') may even give a tantalising clue to the identity of the man buried here.

If it is to be accepted that the western terminus of the trackway was the Iron Age promontory fort of Kenidjack Castle (as argued below), then the existence of a possible third inscribed stone in the vicinity of the track might also be considered. The remnants of this were found near Kenidjack Farm in 1990. All that remained was a flake of granite bearing the letters U(?) . . . S, the tail of the S having a forked serif. There was also the merest hint of a letter from a lower line of inscription. Unfortunately not enough remained to allow dating, which is achieved by study of lettering style.

Stone wayside crosses, often set up on boundaries of parish or land ownership, date from the latter part of this period and into the early part of the Late Medieval period. The important trackway junction at Bishop's Head and Foot was formerly marked by such a cross, as evidenced by the name given in 1613: Meane Crowze an Especk (*men crows an epscop*, 'the bishop's cross-stone'). The ecclesiastical parish of Gulval, which meets those of Towednack

and Zennor at this point, coincided with the Bishop's Manor of Lanisley, which is entered in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The present name refers to the head and base-stone of the former cross which stood here.

Evidence from the Roman period (43-410 AD)

Regressing further to the Roman period, yet more supportive evidence of the trackway existing at that time stems from a number of Roman coin finds close to its path, and along its entire extent.

Roman presence in West Cornwall was negligible and probably restricted to traders. Unlike the Celtic tribes of south-eastern Britain, the Dumnonii and Cornovii of the south-west peninsula did not produce their own coinage. However, it is not beyond the bounds of probability that the native Celtic people accepted receipt of Roman coins for further use in easing the purchase of goods from other Roman Empire nations, rather than for commerce amongst themselves. The clustering of such finds close to the path of the trackway, and including hoards of several coins, cannot be dismissed as evidence that the route was in existence and use at that time.

Evidence from the Iron Age (800 BC-43 AD)

There is supportive Iron Age evidence in abundance. The track bisects the Early Iron Age round-house settlement of Bodrifty, and also the excellent Late Iron Age courtyard house settlement at Bosulow Trehyllys, the two settlements being 4.5 kilometres apart.

The outstanding Iron Age evidence concerns the siting of Chûn Castle, which was built c. 300 BC astride the upper route of the trackway and in which was found an elaborate tin-smelting furnace, tin slag and an ingot.

Legend is very relevant to this site. It claims that Chûn Castle was built by a character named Jack the Tinkeard (dealer in tin), also known as Jack of the Hammer. He had previously been resident at another hill fort at Castle-an-Dinas: it is significant that the Tinnerns' Way and a major offshoot from Bishop's Head and Foot down to Mount's Bay directly links the two forts.

At about the time that Chûn Castle was built, a visitor named Pytheas of Massalia (Marseille) arrived from the Mediterranean and was the first to provide a written account of his visit. His original work *Peritou Okeanou (On the Ocean)* was tragically lost at an early date but other classical writers, such as Timaeus and Diodorus of Sicily, quoted extensively from it. The account provided by Diodorus is the clearest and most detailed. In this, the natives of Belerion (confirmed and located as the Land's End peninsula by Ptolemy in the 1st century AD, naming it Belerium Promontorium), were described as "*civilised and courteous*". Details of how they mined and smelted tin are also given.

Tin extraction at that time probably consisted of valley streaming and shallow lode-back excavation but the account goes on to say that the natives then brought in their wagons to an island named Iktis (possibly British *ek-tiros*, "off the land"), which was joined to the mainland at low water., and from where the goods were transported by sea to the near Continent. St Michael's Mount is the outstanding candidate for this location and recent discoveries of Iron Age earthworks and evidence of imported ware on the island strengthen its case to have been this prehistoric trading port. If the natives of Iron Age West Cornwall were bringing their ingots of tin to the island by wagon, then there must have been established routeways to enable them

to do so. The offshoot track from the Tinnerns' Way mentioned in the previous paragraph leads down from the high moor, and around the head of a then extant estuary (now Marazion Marsh) to a point on the coast directly opposite St Michael's Mount. This cannot be dismissed as merely coincidental.

In fact, a significant number of the early trackways still traceable on the Penwith peninsula lead to Iron Age cliff castles, which might well have served as trading centres. As well as St Michael's Mount, these include Treryn Dinas, Maen Castle, Kenidjack Castle, Bosigran Castle, (possibly) Gurnard's Head, and Carnsew Fort at Hayle, as well as the former cliff castles at Pendeen Watch and The Island, St Ives (Dinas Ia).

Evidence from the Bronze Age (2500– 800 BC)

The preceding Bronze Age provides further strong evidence supporting the existence of the trackway even then. This chiefly takes the form of two hoards of gold objects that had been deliberately concealed in spots close to the route of the trackway, but several kilometres apart.

The Towednack hoard was discovered in a Bronze Age stone hedge in 1931, this being just to the north of the hollow way (and part of the Tinnerns' Way route) now known as Badger's Lane, but formerly as Embla Lane. Consisting of two twisted neck rings (one of single twisted strand, the other of three strands twisted together), four arm rings and two lengths of uncrafted rod. The gold was of a very fine purity and is believed to have been sourced in Ireland.

The Morvah gold hoard was found during quarrying works in 1884 on Morvah Carn ("The Carn" on the O.S. maps), possibly secreted into a former barrow. Again the find site was very close to the Tinnerns' Way: here its upper route. This hoard contained six large bracelets, three of them with expanded "trumpet" terminals and one bearing engraved geometric designs. Again, the gold was of fine purity and believed to be Irish gold. Both hoards have been loosely dated to around 1,000 BC.

It is speculated that these were stocks of goldware secreted by travelling Irish goldsmiths (or perhaps just one person) for safekeeping and later collection but, for some reason, he (or they) never returned to collect them. This goldware was being transported along a known and well-established routeway, the identity of which has only one candidate. Sadly both hoards were removed from Cornish soil and have since languished in London's British Museum. Nonetheless, the existence of these finds and their locations close to the trackway, but 7.3 kilometres apart, provide outstanding supportive evidence that the Tinnerns' Way was in existence at least as early as 1,000 BC.

A hoard of bronze objects was also found close to Kenidjack Castle, the western terminus of the trackway, in the late 19th century. Here, just 140 metres from the ramparts of the later cliff castle, antiquarian W.C. Borlase discovered the foundations of a small stone building containing two socketed axes and a 'winged' palstave of bronze, a casting jet, a score or so pieces of copper and a piece of smelted tin. Analysis of the copper showed the typical impurities that identified it as locally sourced. The dating of this hoard is roughly the same as that given for the two gold hoards.

Early Bronze Age stone circles, dating from c.2500 – 1500 BC, are to be found close to the trackway route at Tregeseal, Men-an-Tol, Boskednan and possibly Treen Common (Zennor Cirque), although the last-named is most likely an Iron Age settlement site. Menhirs and barrows of similar date are found in abundance along the route.

Evidence from the Neolithic period (4500-2000 BC)

The earliest evidence to be offered for the existence of this trade route is the fact that Kenidjack Castle is accepted as the source of greenstone from which Group XVII Neolithic axes were fashioned. Axes of this type and petrology have been found as far away as Lincolnshire, Maiden Castle, Dorset and Hazard Hill in Devon. More locally Group I and Ia axes from Mount's Bay have been found close to the trackway near Tregeseal. Although these do not provide conclusive evidence, the existence in the Neolithic era of established routeways for the transportation of these axes must be considered.

The great dolmens of Chûn, Lanyon, West Lanyon, Mulfra, Zennor, Sperris and the destroyed Giant's Rock dolmen were all within easy reach, and on either side, of the trackway, as are the Neolithic tor enclosures at Carn Galva and Carn Kenidjack.

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