



## CHAPTER V

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO THE SCULPTURE

Surveys of the archaeology of Cornwall have appeared very recently in *Cornish Archaeology* (volume 50, 2011, updating a survey in volume 25), and the present summary is partly based on these. The sections of *Cornish Archaeology* volumes 25 and 50 which have been drawn on most extensively in constructing this narrative are Preston-Jones and Rose 1986; Herring 2011a; Herring 2011b; Nowakowski 2011; Preston-Jones 2011a; Thorpe and Wood 2011; Tyacke, A. 2011.

It is still the case that the early medieval period in Cornwall remains a 'Dark Age'. Although the two centuries immediately following the Roman withdrawal are increasingly well documented archaeologically, the following four are very poorly understood. In this, the archaeological evidence is in marked contrast with the documentary evidence described above, which starts in the eighth century. This summary begins by describing the landscape of Cornwall around two millennia ago, as a framework for understanding the context of the monuments in this volume, for it is becoming increasingly clear that the end of Roman occupation in Britain does not appear as a break in the archaeological record in Cornwall. The way of life in Roman-period Cornwall appears to have continued for at least two centuries beyond the traditional end of Roman Britain, side by side with some new developments, the most conspicuous of which are the introduction of Christianity with its associated monuments and sites and an intensification of trading contact with the Mediterranean, focussed on certain key sites.

#### ROMANO-BRITISH CORNWALL

The evidence suggests a confident and self-sufficient society in Roman-period Cornwall, dependent on arable and stock farming, but increasingly in contact with the rest of Britain and the continent through trade and exchange, particularly of metals. Throughout

the period, the absence of a monetary economy gives Cornwall the appearance of a less affluent society than some parts of Britain. This may be deceptive, however, for the indications are that Cornwall's economy was nonetheless buoyant and the fact that the area did not rely on coinage enabled it to remain stable in the face of the changes brought about by the Roman occupation and withdrawal (Quinnell 2004, xii; Nowakowski 2011, 251–2, 256–8). The glimpses we have from archaeological investigation suggest that Cornish society adopted and adapted certain elements of Roman culture, but was not transformed by it in the way that parts of England were.

#### SETTLEMENT

The principal (or most visible) settlement types of Roman-period Cornwall appear to have been enclosed farming hamlets known as 'rounds' with, in West Penwith, the courtyard houses. Although unenclosed settlements are likely to have existed in the same areas as rounds, they do not show so clearly in the archaeological record. The rounds and courtyard houses for the most part occupy the same general areas as medieval settlement: the better drained, more fertile and sheltered slopes and valley sides, some edging on to higher plateaux. Like their medieval counterparts these were, for the most part, farming hamlets dispersed through the anciently enclosed land, their inhabitants cultivating enclosed fields nearby and grazing stock on the unenclosed rough ground beyond. Encouraged by the economic expansion of the Roman period, the population of Roman Britain as a whole is considered to have expanded rapidly and the number of rounds in Cornwall may have increased, being matched by a similar increase in courtyard house settlements in the far west (Quinnell 1987, 124–6). The sheer numbers of rounds that are now known are thought to 'provide the impression of an increasingly utilised landscape with expanding populations' (Nowakowski 2011, 251) and Herring



suggests that in the Roman period much the same area of Cornwall was under productive agriculture as it was in the eighteenth century (Herring 2011a, 167). There is an indication of socio-economic links between enclosed settlement and significant metal resources in relation to some sites, while coastal and estuarine sites emerge as key contact places during this period (Nowakowski 2011, 248). Examples are St Georges or Looe Island, where Dressel 2-4 amphorae have been recovered from the sea bed and Roman pottery and coins from a ditched enclosure underlying a later medieval chapel on the summit of the island ((—) 2009), and St Michael's Mount where there is limited but increasingly persuasive evidence for its continuing importance throughout prehistoric and through to medieval times (Herring *et al.* 2000, 22-3, 33, 95-8, 103, 121-4; Sturgess 2010, 20-3).

Although a variety of shape and size is known in the enclosed farming settlements or rounds (Johnson and Rose 1982, figs. 2 and 3), these are generally univallate, with an oval or occasionally rectilinear form. The type site is Trethurgy, fully excavated in the 1970s (Quinnell 2004). Behind heavy wooden gates, oval stone-walled buildings included dwellings, a byre, a barn, storehouses, workshops and a possible small shrine. Of particular importance, Quinnell argues, is that Trethurgy Round shows a strong continuance of Iron Age cultural traditions and a selective approach to Roman influence and trends. She argues that the site's occupants used Roman trends to 'reinforce their own social framework which appears to have remained basically solid throughout the Roman centuries' (Quinnell 2004, 236). Although gradually declining, settlement at Trethurgy Round continued into the late sixth or possibly early seventh century (Quinnell 2004, 240-3). Other rounds with evidence of occupation into the post-Roman period include Grambla (Saunders, C. 1972, 52) and Goldherring (Guthrie 1969, 25). Some rounds were specialist sites, focusing on industrial or other activity (Quinnell 2004, 234; Nowakowski 2011, 254). Examples include Little Quoit Farm, specialising in iron working (Lawson-Jones and Kirkham 2009-10, 217-18, 222) and Nancemere, just outside Truro, which appears to have housed workshops associated with iron working, textile and leather working, food processing and possibly brewing: there was no sign of domestic occupation (Nowakowski 2011, 253-4). In the future, a further range of specialist sites might be expected to emerge, including perhaps further sites like Hay Close (below) with a religious specialism, which might be seen to foreshadow the emergence of enclosed Christian

settlements in post-Roman centuries. In summary, the increasing evidence for a diversity of enclosures and a range of specialist sites points to considerable social and economic complexity at the time.

#### RITUAL AND BURIAL

Based on the evidence available to date, burial rite in pre-Roman Cornwall appears to have involved crouched inhumation, with or without cists. The cist cemetery at Harlyn Bay was extensive (Whimster 1977, 73-7), and at Trethellan, near Newquay, burials were placed in unlined grave pits (Nowakowski 1991, 210-32). There is little evidence for burial in Roman-period Cornwall, but that which exists is significant in showing Roman influence on burial practice, with an enclosed individual cremation at Tregony (Taylor, S. forthcoming) and east-west oriented, extended inhumation at Scarcewater, with one of the two or possibly three burials in a cist (Jones and Taylor, S. 2010, 55-9, 89-92). At both sites, the burials appear to have been located close to, but beyond, settlements. Significantly for later developments, a new class of enclosed Iron Age ceremonial site has recently been identified at Hay Close, Newlyn East and Camelford School (Jones forthcoming; Taylor, S. 2010, 23-4; Nowakowski 2011, 251). At Hay Close, the early Iron Age site was re-used in the early medieval period for apparently pagan ritual activities (Jones forthcoming).

#### ROMAN ACTIVITY AND INFLUENCE

Evidence is also emerging for a greater Roman military presence in Cornwall than was hitherto suspected, with the discovery of forts at Restormel and Calstock, both potentially linked to the exploitation of mineral resources (Nowakowski 2011, 256). Roman roads, which may have had an influence on the distribution of early medieval sculpture in some areas (Cramp 2006, 26), remain elusive in Cornwall. Some key routes, not necessarily metalled, may be indicated by the presence of honorific pillars or milestones (Haverfield 1924, 27-32; Collingwood, R. and Wright 1965, 694-7, nos. 2230-2234; Todd 1987, 218-19) and perhaps by places where certain of the inscribed stones, like the Long Cross at St Endellion, were positioned a couple of centuries later (Okasha 1993, 232-5; Thomas, A. C. 1994, 264). Further Romanising influence is likely to have arisen through regular contact with representatives of the Roman regional administration based at Exeter. Although Quinnell has questioned the degree to which areas west of Bodmin Moor were integrated

in the *Civitas Dumnoniorum* (Quinnell 2004, 215–16), discoveries of Roman coins reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme are giving indications of particular areas even in west Cornwall that may have seen greater Roman influence than was hitherto suspected (Tyacke, A. 2011, 72–5; see also Penhallurick 2009). The distribution, although inevitably skewed by land use and the activities of detectorists, is notably coastal and estuarine. Thus gradual changes are apparent in most aspects of life in Roman Cornwall, and changes, for example of house shape, in dining habits and in the occasional appearance of personal items like toilet kits, can probably be attributed to Roman influence. Aescia hinged brooches and stone mortaria found in Cornwall are of interest in showing local interpretation and manufacture of Roman-type artefacts (Tyacke, A. 2011, 72–3; Nowakowski 2011, 257, fig. 12; Tyacke, A., Bayley and Butcher 2011, 139–49); the stone mortaria and other artefacts like weights demonstrate skills in stone carving which (unlike other parts of Roman Britain) are not otherwise manifest in Roman-period Cornwall, except in relation to the carving on the altar on Tresco, Isles of Scilly (Ashbee 1974, 139, 218–19, fig. 11a), and the lettering on a handful of honorific pillars or milestones (Collingwood, R. and Wright 1965, 694–7, nos. 2230–2234).

#### THE TRANSITION TO POST-ROMAN CORNWALL

Quinnell and Nowakowski both suggest that the strength and the continuity evident in Cornwall at the end of the Roman period is likely to be due to the fact that for the most part the Cornish economy operated at the local level without coinage (Quinnell 1983, 29–46), but ‘with bartering ... an enduring and successful strategy’ (Nowakowski 2011, 258). Hence, while other areas of Britain experienced economic collapse with the withdrawal of the Roman presence, Cornwall remained buoyant. A similar continuity has been shown in west Somerset outside Romanised areas (Rippon *et al.* 2006, 32–4). As excavations at sites like Trethurgy demonstrate continuity, so too does the pottery record. Unlike many areas of Britain in the fifth century, where the production and presumably use of ceramics either declined or ceased completely, a local pottery industry flourished in Cornwall. Indeed, in late fifth- and sixth-century Cornwall, native pottery not only continued but was experimental and innovative. ‘Gwithian Style’ early medieval wares are finer and harder fired, and include new forms, notably

a low walled or un-walled platter (Thorpe and Wood 2011, 276–7).

In summary, there is strong continuity evident from Roman into post-Roman periods in Cornwall with features which emerge as characteristic of the early medieval period already in evidence, like distributions of Roman coins and trading sites (Tyacke, A. 2011, 74–5), which might be seen to foreshadow the coastal distribution of early medieval religious and high status sites. Enclosed sites continue as the main settlement type but some sites are more specialised in function and there is a hint that some religious sites might exist within special enclosures. For the most part there is a continuation of a stable and traditional way of life with acceptance, or perhaps selection, of some Roman traits, to suit the needs and tastes of local ways. The significance of these in post-Roman Cornwall will be examined next.

#### POST-ROMAN CORNWALL

##### TRADE: TINTAGEL, AND OTHER CITADELS

While the continued buoyancy of the Cornish economy into the post-Roman period may be attributable to the presence of a strong, rural, non-monetary economy, it must also be related to the appearance in Cornwall in the fifth century of imported pottery signifying trade with the Mediterranean and Gaul. A scatter of late Roman and Byzantine coins reflects the same (Tyacke, A. 2011, 75), and the main reason for this trade is usually assumed to be a continuation of the tin extraction which had been taking place in Roman times (Thomas, A. C. 1993, 94–6; Barrowman *et al.* 2007, 330–1). The outstanding site in this respect is Tintagel where it seems likely that a local dynasty established itself in the wake of the Roman military departure. Recent excavations have shown that the early medieval citadel at Tintagel may have had a Roman-period predecessor (Barrowman *et al.* 2007, 309–13) and it may be no coincidence that in the area there are also two Roman honorific pillars or milestones, clear evidence of late Roman military/official activity. On the mainland opposite Tintagel Island, and closely linked with it, is the earliest definitive evidence for Christianity in Cornwall. Excavations in Tintagel churchyard in the 1980s revealed burials in long-cists and dug graves with evidence of graveside ritual and feasting about an upright pillar-stone, dated to the early fifth century (Nowakowski and Thomas, A. C. 1992, 4–13; see Tintagel 5, Appendix A, p. 227).

Tintagel is unique in Cornwall in that no other

site shows such clear and full evidence of post-Roman activity. But other post-Roman citadels may be indicated by finds of imported pottery at hilltop and coastal strongholds like Chun Castle in West Penwith (Thomas, A. C. 1956, 75–8) and St Michael's Mount. The latter has already been referred to above as a significant place in the Iron Age, trading tin with the Mediterranean, and like Tintagel it is in an area where finds (and again two honorific pillars or milestones) are indicative of a late Roman official or military presence. Tradition associating some sites like Tintagel with Arthurian legend may be a pointer to other early medieval high status sites (Preston-Jones and Rose 1986, 137–9; Turner 2006a, 56).

#### CHRISTIANITY: INSCRIBED STONES, LANNNS AND LAY CEMETERIES

To date, there is no actual evidence that Cornwall was Christian in the Roman period. However with the increasing evidence for a Roman presence the possibility increases that at least pockets of Christianity existed. In fact, Christianity may have been one of the attributes of Romanisation that post-Roman leaders used to bolster their authority, as they emerged as heirs of the Roman administration, as seems likely at Tintagel. If this is true then it also follows that the most likely places for such pockets to be sought will be those with evidence for late Roman military activity and places where imported post-Roman pottery indicates early post-Roman trade with the Mediterranean.

Despite this, the evidence for early Christianity in Cornwall in the post-Roman period points more to links with Wales and Ireland than with the Mediterranean. The presence of ogam script and Irish personal names on some of the early Christian inscribed stones in Cornwall (listed in Appendix E, p. 253, and see Fig. 13) is a strong indication of their cultural background, which Thomas suggests derives mostly from Ireland via south Wales, with some direct influence from Ireland in the far west, supported by evidence of maritime trade with Ireland at Gwithian (Thomas, A. C. 1994, 183–96, 237–75; Nowakowski and Thomas, A. C. 2007, 55, 58). The date of these inscribed stones, from the late fifth or sixth century, indicates that the implied movement of people happened early in the post-Roman period. The distribution of these stones in Cornwall and Devon, which is most dense in west Cornwall, is thought to reflect not only their derivation from south Wales but also native innovation (Thomas, A. C. 1994, 277–303). The main area of Irish influence, as suggested

by ogams or Irish names, is north-east Cornwall (St Kew, Endellion), south-eastwards to Lewannick in mid Cornwall, and across the Tamar into Devon. In Penwith, in the far west of Cornwall, only two stones bear Irish names (the Bleu Bridge Stone, Gulval and Carnsew, Hayle: Okasha 1993, 109–12, 116–21; Thomas, A. C. 1994, 193, 271–2). Although these stones date from three or four centuries earlier than those described in the main catalogue of this volume, the contacts seen in them point in similar directions to the sources of influence seen in the Penwith group of pre-Norman carved stones.

Closely linked to these, and probably originating at about the same time, are the *lanns* (Fig. 13). Although there is some dispute over the origin and status of the enclosed Christian sites or *lanns* which are so characteristic of Christianity in Cornwall (Petts 2002, 30, 39–42; Turner 2006a, 6, 9–10), their early origin is difficult to dispute (Padel 2010a, 116–19; Preston-Jones 2011a, 272–3). The name is a clear reference to the origin of the sites as enclosures (Padel 1976–7, 25; Padel 1985, 142–5; Padel 2010a, 118). The fact that the forms of the enclosures (as seen in the layout of modern churchyards with names in *lann*) are very close to those of rounds (Preston-Jones 1994, 82–4) suggests they may have originated as a specialised form of round, their Christian function established at a date when rounds were still a common settlement type (Herring 1994, 91). The evidence for the existence of specialised rounds in the Roman period has been discussed above. As rounds generally went out of use by the sixth or seventh centuries, the tradition of the enclosure of *lanns* is likely to have been established by that date. Linguistic evidence, including place-names, supports this, the word being well established from as early a period as documentary references capable of showing it exist. Place-names containing *lann* also occur in Somerset, Dorset and Devon, where they can hardly have been created later than *c.* 700 (Oliver Padel, pers. comm.).

The discovery of Mediterranean wares at Mullion churchyard, a *lann* on a site which may be a reused round or hillfort, is strong evidence for the use of the site at this period (Thorpe 2003, 26–9). Padel considers that in the early period *lanns* were specialised settlements, distinguished from most contemporary settlements by the presence of a religious focus, perhaps graves and other features which might not show archaeologically (Padel 2002, 308; Padel 2010a, 116–19; Padel forthcoming b). Like most contemporary settlements, they would have been surrounded by an estate of land for the support of the community. But despite the

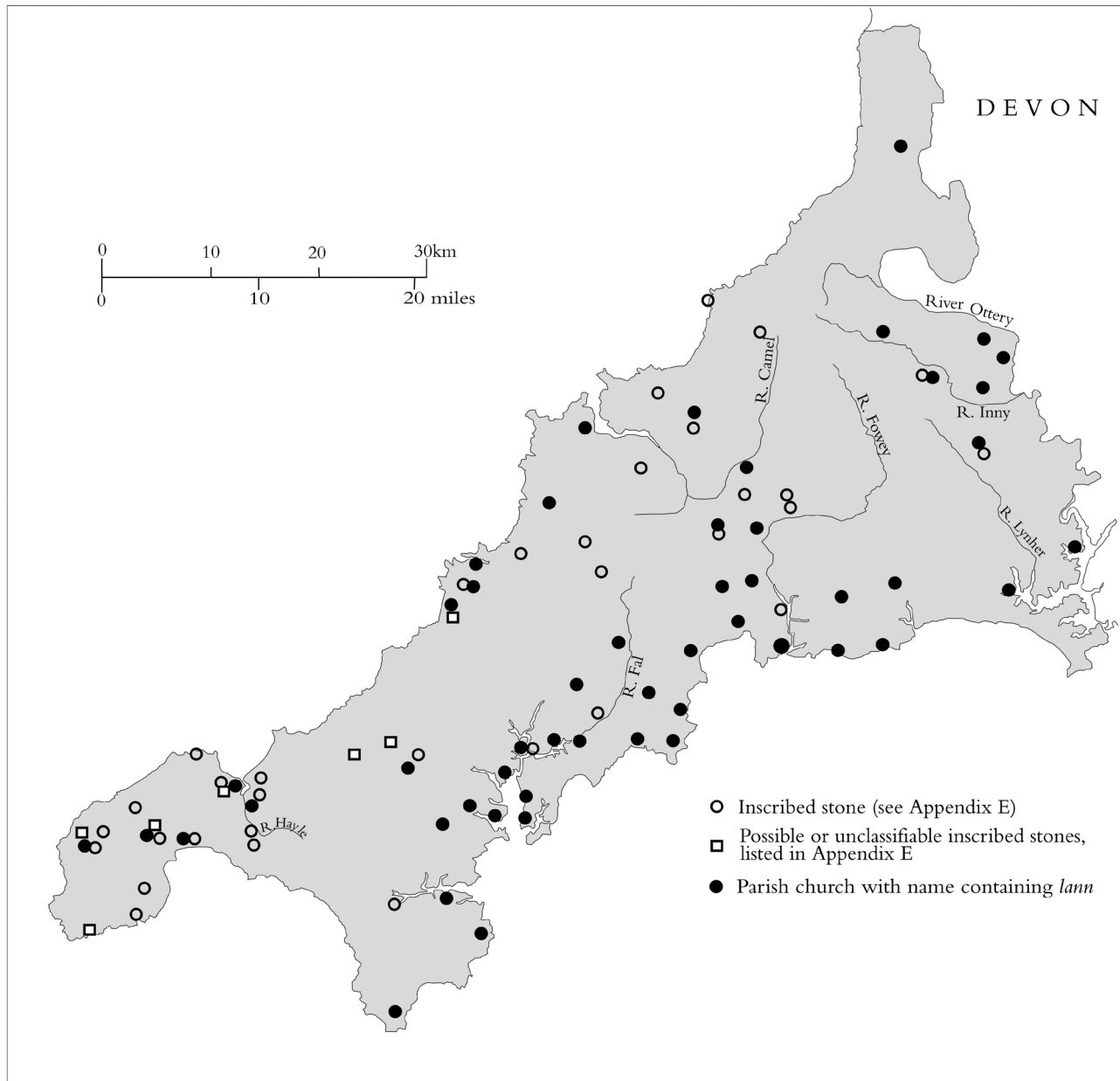


FIGURE 13  
*Lanns* and inscribed stones (see also Fig. 14)

fact that this appears to be a native site-type, related to contemporary settlement and for the most part occupying positions in often choice agricultural areas in anciently enclosed land (Turner 2006a, 83–98), the eccentric locations of the majority of *lanns* is of note. With a strong focus on valley bottom, valley head and estuarine locations, the topographic preference is different from that of most known rounds. Moreover the estuarine and coastal locations of certain *lanns*, some at prime sites which even today are well known harbours or marinas (for example Fowey, Padstow, Hayle, Mylor and Feock) raises the question of the status and function of the sites. In the case of some sites in valley bottoms, close to holy wells, it is possible that they reflect the locations of pre-existing religious foci, but others are more difficult to explain. Unless they do indeed result from the activities of the legendary peripatetic saints and hermits, might they, perhaps, represent Christian settlements established at secular centres by reason of their joint relationship to maritime contact and areas of Romanising influence, with the religious function in some cases superseding the secular at a later date? Although this issue has been discussed it has never been satisfactorily resolved (Preston-Jones 1994, 85–7; Padel 2010a, 116).

Alongside the *lanns*, lay cemeteries appear, on present (limited) evidence, to have been extensive open affairs, often on high ground or along later parish boundaries, for example at St Endellion (Trudgian 1987, 145–52; Johns and Preston-Jones 1996), although the only one which has been dated so far is that at Tintagel (Nowakowski and Thomas, A. C. 1992, 10–11). Only where stone cists are involved are these cemeteries archaeologically visible, for in Cornwall the acid soils destroy bone rapidly, but there must be a strong possibility that similarly extensive cemeteries of burials without cists also existed, where the evidence has simply not survived. The distribution of long-cist cemeteries, as currently known, is strongly biased to the north coast and this may, like the imported pottery, suggest a relationship to Mediterranean influence; however it might equally reflect the chances of survival and the availability of suitable stone to construct the cists (Preston-Jones 1984, 170–2). Some cist cemeteries, like St Endellion and Tintagel, may have developed to acquire a church at a later date, but more research, including scientific dating, is needed to elucidate these uncertainties. A group of Cornish churches, in locations and with enclosures whose form suggests that they may be located in re-used rounds, perhaps reflect a similar origin, with lay burial taking place in a disused enclosure, the site later acquiring the status

of church. On the other hand, a cemetery set within an enclosure at Y Gaer, Bayvil, in south Wales failed to develop in this way (James, H. 1987, 51–76; Petts 2002, 36–7).

Nine early inscribed stones, that is, a significant number from the total, are associated with sites with a name in *lann*, suggesting that the inscribed stones may be linked to *lanns*, as an early feature of the Christian enclosure (see Fig. 13, p. 41). Lewannick, with two inscribed stones possibly of the sixth century, is the outstanding example (Preston-Jones 1986, 157; Okasha 1993, 146–53; Thomas, A. C. 1994, 262–3, 311–13), but others exist at Madron (*Landithy*), St Just in Penwith (*Lanuste*), Cubert (*Lanlovey*) and Lanivet (again two). At Mabe (*Lavabe*) is an uninscribed pillar stone (Mabe 1, Appendix A, p. 217) which may have originated as a prehistoric standing stone but might equally be an early feature of the Christian site, like the monolith at Tintagel (Tintagel 5, Appendix A, p. 227).

A smaller number of the inscribed stones exist in non-ecclesiastical contexts, where their presence can be seen to be related to a track or a ford and often also to a later parish boundary. Some, which have been found at settlements, may have stood as memorials in the settlement (Preston-Jones and Rose 1986, 157). In parts of Wales, it is possible that a stronger Roman culture and the presence of many Roman milestones or honorific pillars may have influenced the development of the early Christian memorials (Edwards 2007, 4). Only a few such stones are known in Cornwall, but their correspondence in form with the early Christian inscribed stones is notable: as upright pillar stones, with inscriptions, which may have marked routes but also stood in settlements (Preston-Jones 2011b, appendix 2), they do foreshadow some of the ways in which the early Christian inscribed stones were used from the sixth century. Although one or two inscribed stones in Cornwall may be re-cut standing stones, the majority are smaller, roughly squared pillars, like the Roman pillars. On the other hand, the vertical layout of the majority of the inscriptions, probably derived from the layout of Irish ogam inscriptions, is in strong contrast with Roman tradition.

It has been suggested that in other parts of the British Isles where the earliest free-standing crosses were set up, such inscribed memorial stones may have provided part of the inspiration. That is hardly likely to be the case in Cornwall, where crosses were an introduction of the late ninth century, but it is clear that these free-standing, carved, upright stones, along with prehistoric standing stones, were already a part of Cornwall's landscape and this may have helped to

foster the introduction and subsequent multiplication of the crosses. Moreover, the range of sites where the inscribed stones are found is often very similar to the places where crosses are found, despite the three centuries that separate them (see also p. 166 below).

#### SUMMARY

In summary, the first two centuries of the post-Roman period in Cornwall, as currently understood, present a picture which is markedly different from that in other parts of Britain, especially those areas which had been more strongly Romanised and then subject to early Anglo-Saxon invasion. In Cornwall there is evidence for active trading focussed on at least one high status site, with the products of that trade being disseminated into the wider countryside. Crafts continued, with the pottery industry notably lively, and workshops in irregular-shaped buildings dug into the sand on the estuary at Gwithian working iron, bronze, bone and leather, and recycling imported ceramics (Sturgess 2007, 44; Herring 2011b, 268–9). Finds from the Gwithian workshops are considered to reflect ‘Irish, Welsh and even possible Anglo-Saxon influences’, although full publication is needed to clarify this (Nowakowski and Thomas, A. C. 2007, 55). Christianity became the increasingly dominant religion, although there is unsurprising evidence that pagan practice persisted for some time (Preston-Jones 2011a, 271; Jones forthcoming). The form of early church sites appears to have been based on the existing settlement type. With time, and especially as churchyard burial became the norm, these may have acted as a base for local evangelism, leading ultimately to the development of some as parochial centres. Lay cemeteries on hilltops and boundaries may follow Iron Age and Romano-British traditions. Some settlements in rounds continued to be occupied into the sixth and seventh centuries, the houses and buildings within them reflecting a continuation of Roman-period forms (Quinnell 2004, 238–43). Presumably also, while the economy remained buoyant, the fields surrounding settlements continued to be cultivated: some evidence of cultivation at this period was found at Gwithian (Fowler and Thomas, A. C. 1962, 61–79) and Newquay (Herring 2011b, 268). Small structures used for transhumance have been identified on Bodmin Moor (Herring 1994, 81, fig. 53; Herring 2006b, 78, 89, fig. 41) and possibly Stencoose (Jones 2000–1, 86–90), showing that the seasonal exploitation of rough ground for summer grazing and fuel collection continued (Herring 2011b, 263–6). The discovery

of ingots at Praa Sands shows that tin exploitation continued, and there are some pointers to the fact that Cornish tin reached an international market (Penhallurick 1986, 233–4, 237–43).

On the other hand, recent coring on Bodmin Moor suggests a sudden decline in tinning at the end of Roman Cornwall, the activity only being resumed in the two centuries later: ‘Beginning in the 7th century AD the chemical record shows extensive tin-working all the way through to the time of the Norman invasion some four centuries later. This supports what the scant archaeological evidence from this period suggests that Britain was more than likely the only source of European tin by this time’ <<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/publications/planetearth/2012/summer/sum12-bogged.pdf>>.

It may have been this setting of stability and continuity, fostered by an elite attempting to maintain Roman traditions, which allowed the establishment, within a couple of centuries, of a multitude of religious settlements or *lanns*, memorials and cemeteries, many of which are still in use. The combined distributions of these sites suggest that by the seventh century Christian sites were well established over much of Cornwall (Preston-Jones 1986, 156; Preston-Jones 1994, 85–93). Amongst these, some larger early Christian enclosures stand out as sites likely to have been of greater status, perhaps from the beginning (Preston-Jones 1994, 86–8); some of these are recorded later in sources including Domesday Book as land-owning churches with communities of clerics (Olson 1989, 86–97; Orme 2010, 126–35) or as mother churches (Preston-Jones 1994, 86–7). One such is St Kew, the monastery of Docco referred to in the ‘Life’ of St Samson and recorded later as a land-owning church with a religious community (Olson 1989, 14–16, 81–3; Orme 2010, 131). Compared to these, the smaller enclosures may have served only very local communities. The exact nature of these sites is not known. St Helen’s, on the Isles of Scilly, perhaps reflects the layout of the smallest of *lanns*, although the excavator was emphatic that the site’s origin was not early (O’Neill 1964, 43–5, fig. 1; however it is probable that the pottery from this excavation now needs re-evaluating). This overall diversity of sites from the very start of the early medieval period is different from the way the church is thought to have developed in Anglo-Saxon England, where Christianity was re-introduced after the Roman period and the minsters developed in the seventh century to form the foundation of England’s ecclesiastical system (Blair 2005, 246–90), with their network only gradually expanding and infilling with



large numbers of lesser sites. In Cornwall, churches with minster-like properties do not appear until the end of the period, moulded to this role through English influence on the church in Cornwall (Padel 2010a, 119). However it is mostly at these sites that we find the sculpture described in this volume.

#### EIGHTH AND NINTH CENTURIES

Just at the point when the historical record begins in earnest, the archaeological record becomes very sparse and there is little evidence for material culture after the seventh century. A rift in the pottery record, which involved the introduction of Grass-Marked ware, more crudely made than the preceding styles and in a more limited range of forms, appears suggestive of cultural change to a more subsistence level, although pottery did at least continue being produced (Thorpe and Wood 2011, 279–80). Meanwhile the imported pottery also comes to an end. Thus, taken alone, the pottery suggests that some time around the end of the seventh century may have been a pivotal point for Cornwall in its transition to the medieval period. If the pottery record can be taken as a barometer for society as a whole, then this may reflect change more generally. It helps to set the scene for the next era. Yet this is the eighth century, the single century referred to in the preceding chapter as the time when Cornwall existed as an independent entity (p. 22).

#### SETTLEMENT

The rounds known from excavation appear to have gone out of use by this time, or earlier. It is generally assumed that at some point they were replaced as the dominant settlement type by the unenclosed, farming hamlets which to this day still form the core of Cornwall's farming economy in the anciently enclosed land — the *trefs* (Padel 1985, 223–32; Padel 2007, 215–17). As most *trefs* are still in use to this day and none have been subject to excavation, their exact date of origin, their form in the early medieval period and the precise nature of their economy is not known. However, based on the existence of *tre-* names in Devon, it may be safe to assume that the place-name element was in use before the Anglo-Saxon assimilation of Devon (Padel 2007, 215–17, fig. 16.1). The extent to which the *trefs* replace or perpetuate patterns of earlier settlement is the subject of some uncertainty. Some see the desertion of rounds, often found on interfluvial spurs, to be matched by a migration to the

unenclosed *trefs*, generally located in more sheltered topographical locations. The alternative view is that the rounds on higher ground, which survive as crop-marks and earthworks, may represent a high tide of settlement and agriculture on marginal land resulting from the favourable economic conditions of the Roman and immediately post-Roman periods, settlement which was bound to decline and fail in less favourable economic and environmental climates. This theory proposes continuity of settlement sites on valley sides in the anciently enclosed land, where the *trefs* might be seen as unenclosed rounds (or as rounds which had ceased to be enclosed) occupying much the same locations as their prehistoric ancestors, the enclosure perhaps less important as pressure on land receded, or anachronistic in a changed social climate (Rose and Preston-Jones 1995, 57–62). Another version of the second argument suggests that the *trefs* may occupy the same space in the landscape as the rounds but on different sites, the boundaries of the farming estates being the places where continuity exists (Herring 2011b, 268; seen especially in Jones and Taylor, S. 2010, 59–62, 85–7). The truth, of course, is likely to be a combination of these factors. Either way, the placing of *trefs* in the modern landscape suggests a regularly dispersed settlement pattern, and a well-exploited landscape (Preston-Jones and Rose 1986, 141–5; Rose and Preston-Jones 1995, 52).

The houses, yards and outbuildings associated with settlements of the late seventh, eighth and ninth centuries are simply not known, perhaps because their remains lie beneath the buildings of modern *tre-* named settlements. Only a few examples of simple huts are known (Herring 2011b, 268), and it is not until the tenth century, with the buildings excavated at Mawgan Porth, that there is any evidence for house layout: so the extent to which the latter are typical or reflect earlier forms is unknown. In their courtyard arrangement they hark back to the Roman-period courtyard houses of West Penwith, while some of the houses, which incorporate a byre and cross passage, look forward to the typical medieval long-house (Bruce-Mitford *et al.* 1997, 7–62, 87).

#### FARMING

According to Herring, a decline in transhumance on the rough ground is linked to the development of convertible husbandry, a method of cultivation still used in Cornwall today, whereby fields are cultivated for about three years and then left under grass for seven years. Herring further suggests that the 'origins





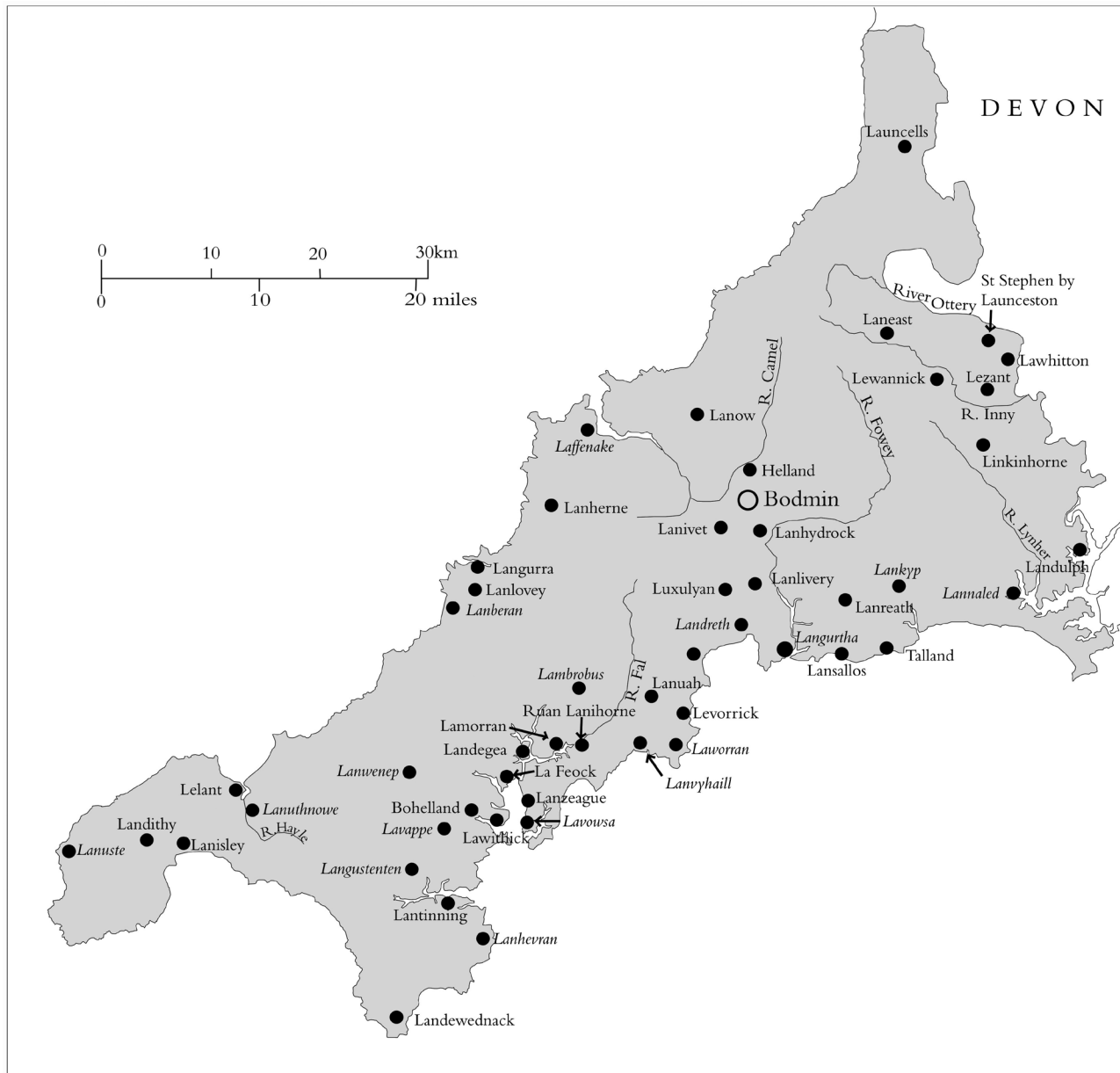


FIGURE 14

Parish churches with names containing *lann*. Dates and identifications of obsolete names appear below.

- |                                      |  |   |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Bohelland (St Gluvias)               | <i>Langustenten</i> 1501 (Constantine) | <i>Lanuste</i> 1396 (St Just in Penwith)      |
| La Feock (Feock)                     | Lanherne (St Mawgan in Pydar)          | <i>Lanuthnowe</i> 1649 (St Erth)              |
| <i>Laffenake</i> c.1620 (Padstow)    | <i>Lanhevran</i> 1504 (St Keverne)     | <i>Lanvyhaill</i> 1477 (St Michael Caerhayes) |
| <i>Lambrobos</i> c.1730 (Probus)     | Lanisley (Gulval)                      | <i>Lanwenep</i> 1393 (Gwennap)                |
| <i>Lanberan</i> 1303 (Perranzabuloe) | <i>Lankyp</i> 1286 (Duloe)             | Lanzeague (St Just in Roseland)               |
| Landegea (Old Kea)                   | Lanlovey (Cubert)                      | <i>Lavappe</i> 1553 (Mabe)                    |
| Landithy (Madron)                    | <i>Lannaled</i> 10th c. (St Germans)   | <i>Lavovsa</i> 1502 (St Mawes)                |
| <i>Landreth</i> 1601 (St Blazey)     | Lanow (St Kew)                         | Lawithick (Mylor)                             |
| Langurra (Crantock)                  | Lantinning (St Anthony in Meneage)     | <i>Laworran</i> 1659 (Goran)                  |
| <i>Langurtha</i> 1775 (Fowey)        | Lanuah (St Ewe)                        | Levorrick (Mevagissey)                        |

of Cornwall's small-scale, hamlet or *tre*-level strip fields are also sought around the eighth century' (Herring 2006a, 73; Herring 2011b, 266–7, quotation from p. 267). Moreover the 'establishment of strip field systems and the apparently open hamlets that farmed them over most of Cornwall's anciently enclosed land appears to have been preceded by the wholesale dismantlement of later prehistoric and Roman-period fields whose lines can be detected as crop marks on aerial photographs or through geophysical survey, a revision that was so radical that an ideological basis for it has been suggested, perhaps associated with the arrival of Christianity' (Herring 1994, 91–3; Herring 2006a, 73; Herring 2011b, 267–8; quotation from Herring 2011b, 267–8). Such thought-provoking but to some extent speculative ideas are stimulating but need testing through further research. There is indeed evidence for a radical change in field systems between Roman and medieval periods (for example at Trenithan and Trenoweth: Rose and Preston-Jones 1995, 57–60, figs. 3.2, 3.3; Trenowah, St Austell: Johns 2008, 18, 43, 46, fig. 29, suggested by Herring (2006a, 71) as probably pre-Norman), but to what extent this is apparent more in marginal ground (that deserted by the rounds and re-occupied as medieval settlement expanded) than in the anciently enclosed core has yet to be clearly established.

Workshops at Gwithian continued into the eighth century (Sturgess 2007, 40–4), and at Duckpool on the coast north of Bude a beach-head Romano-British metalworking site in the far north of Cornwall was re-occupied from the seventh to the eleventh centuries and again used for industry, though the exact nature of the industry taking place is obscure (Ratcliffe 1995, 114–15). At Winnianton on the north-west coast of the Lizard peninsula, excavations are revealing a coastal settlement, which is likely to represent remains of the head manor of the Domesday hundred of the same name. Excavation of this significant site, which is subject to active coastal erosion, is in its early stages. It will be of the greatest interest to see whether ongoing work shows that the Anglo-Saxon manorial centre occupies the same site as an earlier Cornish one, or whether it was an entirely new foundation (see Chapter IV, p. 35). At present, the pottery points to a broadly eighth- to twelfth-century date but the detail remains to be confirmed (Imogen Wood pers. comm.). Otherwise, secular administrative centres may be indicated by sites with a place-name in *lys* (Padel 1985, 150–1; Padel 2010b, 212–13; Preston-Jones and Rose 1986, 137–9, fig. 2; Turner 2006a, 56–7), with the example of most relevance to this volume being

Liskeard, potentially the seat of the ninth-century King Doniert, whose sculpted memorial may have stood close by (see Chapter IV, p. 25, and the discussion of St Cleer 2, pp. 134–7).

#### CHRISTIANITY

The obscurity surrounding the nature of changes in settlement and land use in the late seventh and eighth centuries and on into the ninth is just as mysterious for the Church. There are no identified Christian stone monuments of this period, as there are in Wales (Edwards 2007, 49; Redknap and Lewis 2007, 136–7). It is clear that, through their developing function as central places for the new religion, the specialised Christian rounds or *lanns* do continue, since many survive today as the sites of parish churches (Fig. 14, p. 45). The sole evidence for the Church in this period comes from Padstow, site of St Petroc's monastery and later the paramount religious house in Cornwall. Just outside the modern churchyard were uncovered long-cists, in a location which suggests that an originally larger religious enclosure may have contracted (Manning and Stead 2002–3). These were dated to cal AD 680–890; the mix of ages and sexes, combined with an indication that the individuals had led physically stressful lives, may indicate a secular population, and therefore that by this date most in society were being buried in churchyards rather than in ancestral burial grounds (Petts 2002, 42–6; Blair 2005, 63–5). A sherd of rare north French 'Hamwih ware' discovered here is a small but significant indicator of the wide trading contacts of a site that in the late tenth century was of sufficient importance to attract Viking raiders (Allan and Langman 2002–3, 97; Padel 2010a, 119).

So, in contrast with the archaeological information that we have for Cornwall in the two centuries following the Roman departure, the evidence for the following two centuries is extremely sparse. This is perhaps not surprising considering the political situation, with Cornwall isolated and impoverished through the gradual loss of Mediterranean trading links and increasingly under pressure from the Anglo-Saxons in the east, even though this is the time when the documentary evidence starts to increase (see Chapter IV, p. 22). The archaeological record for Cornwall at this period is thus different from the documentary record which, emanating mainly from an Anglo-Saxon background, starts around now. It is also in contrast with England, especially in relation to the Church, where the eighth century saw the minsters at their peak of wealth and power. It appears that

Cornwall's century of independence, far from being a blaze of Celtic glory, may have been a period of inward-looking subsistence, with the Church perhaps gaining increasing prominence in a time of stress and difficulty.

#### VIKING IMPACT

Overall, the character of Cornish early medieval sculpture links it to western British Viking-age sculptural tradition, with some features like the Borre style ring-chain on Cardinham 1 (Ill. 46) which may imply direct Viking influence. Therefore, although evidence for Viking activity in Cornwall is slight, it requires brief consideration. As has been discussed in Chapter IV, p. 23, the Cornish at first joined forces with the Danes to fight the English, their common foe, but by the tenth century, when Cornwall was politically part of England, the Cornish themselves were under attack, as seen with the raid on Padstow. Either way, the Vikings reflect a new type of overseas contact in a peninsula whose long sea coast has always made it open to maritime influence. The Trewhiddle hoard, buried in an active stream-working in the late ninth century, is thought to have been a product of Viking activity, though whether it was buried by Vikings or to keep it safe from them is uncertain (Wilson and Blunt 1961). Nonetheless, its interest is considerable, first in showing that tin working was taking place at this time, second because it may represent the treasure of a Cornish church, and third because its artistic background is English. However, although this national art 'style' has a distinctively Cornish name, it apparently failed to have any impact on the sculpture which is the main subject of this volume or, on present evidence, on any other artwork of the period from Cornwall. By the late eleventh century there is unequivocal evidence of Cornish trading links with Norse settlers in Ireland in the discovery of Grass-Marked ware in one house in the coastal *longphort* at Waterford, Ireland (Gahan and McCutcheon 1997, 289; Wood forthcoming).

Anglo-Saxon and Viking trading activity in west Cornwall is now becoming evident in the form of finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The brief note by Anna Tyacke in *Cornish Archaeology* 50 is repeated here in full as, with the documentary evidence described above in Chapter IV, it is of some relevance for the early Cornish sculpture: 'Early medieval finds [in Cornwall] are extremely rare, especially Anglo-Saxon or Viking artefacts. But the

far west of the county is providing new evidence of influence from these cultures, perhaps from the sea and the Scillies, rather than from the expanding kingdom of Wessex. So far two ninth- to eleventh-century Hiberno-Norse buckles, three eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon stirrup strap mounts, and three eleventh-century coins have been found in Penwith. The two buckles, from Sennen and Phillack [on the Hayle estuary] (CORN-902CE5 and CORN-EC5F13...), have snake-like heads with circular eye-sockets for stone settings at each apex of the D-shaped frame, commonly found on tenth-century strap ends in Hiberno-Norse Dublin (Tyacke 2004–5). The Sennen stirrup mount (CORN-C57246) has decorative silver wire and niello inlay of Anglo-Scandinavian style. The Paul stirrup mount (CORN-9CABC7) has enamelled zoomorphic decoration, and the Ludgvan strap mount (CORN-CD2446) has a saltire cross dividing four lozenges. At the same time, silver cut halfpennies of Edward the Confessor (1042–1066) (CORN-F06E11 and CORN-635F45) and William I (1066–1087) (CORN-642B57) were being used in Phillack near Hayle' (Tyacke, A. 2011, 75–6).

Although slight, such evidence has hitherto been lacking in Cornwall, and so is of importance to understanding the influences seen in the sculpture of West Penwith, for it demonstrates the means by which the wide-ranging contacts seen in this sculpture could have been transmitted. The snake heads depicted on two of these artefacts, though different from those seen on the Gwinear 1 cross (from Roseworthy, now at Lanherne, p. 153, Ills. 93, 95) and the Sancreed 1 cross (p. 198, Fig. 3b–c, Ill. 215), are nonetheless of interest in showing the existence of such a motif in the area, though in another medium. As with the evidence for Romanising influence seen at an earlier date, it seems likely that the contact represented was associated with the cultural background to the distinctive sculpture of West Penwith.

Chapter IV has shown that a handful of Hiberno-Norse settlers are recorded in Cornwall, yet there are no place-names or other evidence of Scandinavian settlement in Cornwall similar to that seen in other parts of the country (p. 33). Again, this may reflect the embedded nature of rural settlement in Cornwall. If Scandinavian settlement took place at all, it was within the framework of the existing pattern of settlement, or in the ports and estuaries where trading took place and where, at a later date, historical sources indicate cosmopolitan communities (for example at Mousehole: Mattingly 2009, 33–4; Penryn and Lostwithiel: Oliver Padel, pers. comm.).



## TENTH TO ELEVENTH CENTURIES

## SETTLEMENT AND ECONOMY

It is assumed that the rural settlement pattern of *trefs*, once established, continued with little change. Grass-Marked pottery found at Trelissick, Feock, is the earliest material evidence so far at a settlement with a name in *tre-* (Taylor, S. and Thorpe 2008, 177–82). Continuity in the basic rural landscape and economy may be implied by the fact that the Grass-Marked pottery tradition, once established, remained current and virtually unchanged for nearly 500 years and was only replaced in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries by Cornish medieval coarse-wares (Thorpe and Wood 2011, 280). Although stability may have been the key within the core settlement areas, there is evidence too of a recovery and an expansion from the recession of the middle centuries. The fact that by the time of Domesday Book certain settlements with names indicative of seasonal settlement (*havos*) had become permanent, and in the case of Hamatethy on Bodmin Moor, a manor, suggests that settlement and agriculture were once more starting to edge on to the more marginal land (Johnson and Rose 1994, 77–80; Rose and Preston-Jones 1995, 53). Herring dates the establishment of a settlement at Brown Willy, on Bodmin Moor, on the foot-slopes of Cornwall's highest hill, to the late first millennium AD, in an initiative encouraged by the lord of the manor of Fawton. This is considered to be a development occurring in response to pressure on the agricultural economy and an expanding population, perhaps also linked to the working of valley tin deposits (Herring 2006b, 83–7).

We need to question whether this evidence of recovery and expansion is, like the burgeoning sculpture, related to an economy improving as the Anglo-Saxons established a more secure political climate, with Cornwall a fully-integrated county of England or whether it is related to environmental factors, possibly a warming of the climate from the ninth century (Straker 2008, 164); whether it is due to the evidence of growing international contacts and trade seen more widely in the South-west (Webster 2008b, 171); or to a combination of these factors. In any case the growth in settlement implies a growth in the economy, which must form the backdrop to the appearance of the labour-intensive and costly sculptured monuments described in this corpus.

## CHRISTIANITY

The documentary evidence shows the Church coming

increasingly under English authority. Despite this, the strong existing network of religious sites was respected and developed to form the basis of the Cornish parochial system: place-names and the churchyard survey mentioned above show most Cornish parish churches to be based on early sites, while other lesser sites increasingly filled the landscape (Preston-Jones 1994, 92; Turner 2006a, 161). In the tenth century, the see of St Germans was established at a *lann* (Padel 1978, 26–7; Orme 2010, 129–30; and see above, Chapter IV, p. 25) while St Petroc's, based initially at Padstow (originally *Languihenoc*: Padel 1988, 131), and later at Bodmin, became Cornwall's most powerful monastery. Other land-owning religious houses become more apparent, identified principally by documentation, their status from an early date confirmed by large enclosures, by names in *lann*, by dedications to patron saints whose relics may have been preserved in shrines in the churches, and occasionally by extended sanctuaries (Padel 2010a; Padel forthcoming b; Olson 1989; Orme 2010, 126–35). At South Hill and Tintagel churches the use of long-cists continued beyond the Norman Conquest (Nowakowski and Thomas, A. C. 1992, 17–27; Gossip 2002, 10–14, 16–17; Gossip forthcoming), and Mawgan Porth shows that some unenclosed cemeteries continued in use into the tenth and eleventh centuries (Bruce-Mitford *et al.* 1997, 63–70). However it is thought that by this date community cemeteries had generally gone out of use in favour of churchyard burial (Petts 2002, 42–5), a tendency that was probably encouraged by the imposition of Anglo-Saxon law (although see Blair 2005, 464).

The nature of church sites at the end of the early medieval period is as obscure as it is for earlier centuries. Manors recorded in Domesday Book with a name in *eglos* 'church' presumably featured a church building, unless the names reflect a meaning which encompassed more than this. It has been suggested that the rectangular churchyards of certain Cornish churches may reflect late pre-Norman foundations of churches at manorial centres, their rectilinear enclosures betraying a different origin and status from the *lanns*: interestingly these are not the sites where early sculpture is found (Preston-Jones 1994, 76, 92). Sites like St Endellion, with an earlier cist cemetery, may have acquired a church. Documentation indicates the existence of churches at major religious centres like Bodmin and Padstow (Hooke 1994, 70–82). At sites with documented religious communities, the presence of administrative offices and housing for priests must be assumed. The altar stones at Phillack, Camborne and Treslothan (pp. 195, 128, 130) and



the fonts described in this volume, if early medieval, must have stood in church buildings. But to date, the physical remains of church buildings have not been recognised, other than a potential fragment of St Germans cathedral, stratified beneath the walls of the late Norman choir (Olson and Preston-Jones 1998–9). Perhaps the buildings for the most part were relatively modest and swept away in Norman re-building (Preston-Jones and Rose 1986, 162). This would very probably be the case if they were as humble as those excavated at St Helen's on the Isles of Scilly (O'Neill 1964, 44, fig. 1; 46, fig. 2). The dating of a number of small chapels at sites excavated in the second half of the twentieth century, and for which an early medieval date has been proposed, remains unsure, and certain allegedly diagnostic criteria like the double-square plan are unproved (Thomas, A. C. 1968b, 10–14, fig. on 13; Russell and Pool 1968, 53). An east–west building to the north of Tintagel church, with a font fragment built into the wall, has not been fully excavated and so remains undated and its nature unproven: the plethora of small east–west buildings at St Helen's should warn against uncritical acceptance as a church (O'Neill 1964, 44, fig. 1; Nowakowski and Thomas, A. C. 1993, 14–17). St Helen's may however indicate the range of possible structures present, even

in a small site, around the eleventh century (O'Neill 1964, 40–69).

The fact is that the sculpture which began to populate the Cornish landscape from the late ninth and tenth centuries remains the most tangible evidence for the later part of the early medieval period in Cornwall, and the links that it betrays the best clue to cultural influence, other than the few small finds referred to above. Unlike the documentary evidence with its tendency to emphasise Anglo-Saxon cultural links, the sculpture helps to give a more rounded view of the cultural milieu of Cornwall before the Norman Conquest. Although 'the appearance of crosses coincides with arrival of English rule ... their form and motifs can be paralleled all over the British Isles' (Preston-Jones 2011a, 275–6, quotation from p. 276), and the careful appraisal made possible through work associated with this volume has established their distinctively Cornish identity. Returning to a theme mentioned earlier in relation to Cornwall's adoption of certain Roman attributes, it can without doubt be said that this new monument type was likewise selected and taken up with enthusiasm, to become a characteristic and enduring feature of medieval Cornwall.