

St Buryan Churchyard Cross

Prof. Michelle P Brown,
3.3.16

St Buryan Church PCC, Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Scott & Co. Chartered Surveyors and local builders, Edward and William Bolitho, assisted by Barrie Wynter and Chris Williams are together undertaking works to restore the imposing stepped medieval cross in the churchyard. This also offers the opportunity of some archaeological exploration of how and when this complex monument was formed and to see whether the granite slabs set as the steps include any pieces of early sculpture in addition to the cross-head.

St Buryan has played a key role in the history of West Penwith and of Cornwall as a whole, and in the 10th century, when the core of the cross was probably erected, it was the focus of patronage by King Athelstan, grandson of Alfred the Great who led resistance against the Vikings, who visited and endowed St Buryan's church c.931. Traditionally said to be the site of a 6th-century Celtic monastery founded by an Irishwoman, St Buriana, and there are archaeological clues that this may have re-used the defensive enclosure of an earlier Romano-British round or hillfort.

Rev'd Canon Vanda Perrett said "The St Buryan Churchyard cross sits at the heart of this ancient, vibrant community and is a much-loved focus of village life, clambered over by the young and used as a backdrop for many of life's landmarks, such as weddings. A timely grant from Historic England's Heritage at Risk fund has enabled us to stabilise and preserve it for future generations." Professor Michelle Brown, representing St Buryan PCC on the project, added "This is an exciting opportunity to find out more, and to engage the public, of all ages, in exploring the heritage at the heart of living communities. This work will help us to understand better how the monument and the churchyard assumed their current forms and how they featured in Cornish history and faith. Work has only just started and already one of the granite steps has revealed, when turned over, that it was a reused tomb-cover which may date from around the

11th century. Research will have to be conducted into this and other discoveries, but suffice it to say that a Cornish monument of this sort is a rare find!”

Things are moving fast and the work will be finished by the end of next week, although educational and community outreach work will continue, with talks and guided walks (by crosses expert Andrew Langdon and Michelle Brown) and on site information available.

1st March 2016









2nd March 2016







3rd March 2016



4th March 2016

