“The archaeological revision of the Isles of Scilly, 1978”

Norman Quinnell

Sheetlines, 118 (August 2020), pp3-18


This article is provided for personal, non-commercial use only. Please contact the Society regarding any other use of this work.

Published by
THE CHARLES CLOSE SOCIETY
for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps
www.CharlesCloseSociety.org

The Charles Close Society was founded in 1980 to bring together all those with an interest in the maps and history of the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and its counterparts in the island of Ireland. The Society takes its name from Colonel Sir Charles Arden-Close, OS Director General from 1911 to 1922, and initiator of many of the maps now sought after by collectors.

The Society publishes a wide range of books and booklets on historic OS map series and its journal, Sheetlines, is recognised internationally for its specialist articles on Ordnance Survey-related topics.
**The archaeological revision of the Isles of Scilly, 1978**

Norman Quinnell

Prior to 1978 the whole of the Isles of Scilly had been published by the Ordnance Survey at the scale of 1:2500 (25 inches to 1 mile). The initial surveys of the 1880s had last been revised in 1906, apart from a little in 1958. In 1978 the OS decided that even if the main islands were to be revised at 1:2500, only the areas of Hugh Town and Old Town would be so published; everything else would be at 1:10,000 as the largest scale.

The Scillonian project would necessitate a field section of a half dozen surveyors who, with air photo assistance, would update all field boundaries, houses, roads, paths and other features, applying the normal OS descriptions as required. The archaeology would be dealt with by an Archaeology Branch section, although by 1978 there were some within the OS hierarchy who considered archaeology an anachronism and unnecessary expense. The South West section (me, John Barton and Nick Attrill) would break off from the archaeological survey of Dartmoor which had been under way for two months and go to Scilly.

At the end of January I was called in to the OS Regional Office in Bristol. Their sole responsibility to us was to supply stores such as stationery and tapes and to pay our expenses (other than salaries). For all other control, movements and other decisions about fieldwork, we came under Archaeology Branch at Southampton. Bristol informed me that they had calculated there were fewer than fifty archaeological sites on Scilly and we could deal with them in less than three weeks. Therefore we would not be included in the office accommodation that would be found for the other field surveyors, who would be on Scilly for about six months. Furthermore expenses would be paid for residing on St Mary’s but not on other islands. Their basis for the fifty sites was looking at the old two-and-a-half inch map; there had been no consultation with Archaeology Branch which had done the primary recording and prepared all the material to be sent to us. The estimates were ludicrous and to be allowed only to reside on St Mary’s would clearly limit the working day on other islands.

At Archaeology Branch, Southampton, Arthur Clarke was in charge of all the Field Sections of the country. He rightly decided that since the OS would never undertake another survey of Scilly, all our surveys would be based on the obsolescent 1:2500 plans for archive purposes and re-penned at a reduced scale on the 1:10,000 maps supplied to the other surveyors. These were specially prepared air photo transcriptions.

---

1 A brief biography of Norman Quinnell (28 May 1925-13 April 2008) will be found as an endnote to this article (which has been abridged with the permission of the Cornish Archaeological Society and Henrietta Quinnell from a paper written by Quinnell and published post-mortem in *Cornish Archaeology*, vol 48-9, 2009-10, 227-41).
On Tuesday 14 February we arrived at Penzance and collected the boxes of maps and records, compiled by the Archaeology Branch Recording section, which awaited us at the Post Office. A scan of this material that evening revealed that nearly three hundred sites had been recorded for investigation. We boarded the Scillonian on 15 February with our minimal equipment and met the other half-dozen surveyors who had already loaded their office furniture, including tables, chairs and filing cabinets. Their office was to be a disused flat in part of the Secondary School on St Mary’s; their residential accommodation had been arranged close to the School. We had found ours in advance, a hotel somewhat inconveniently a mile and a half from Hugh Town, a temporary expedient.

Clearly our stay would be protracted. We would need to be in Hugh Town for boats, and for cheaper accommodation since the OS would only pay hotel rates for a very limited period; thereafter it was a ‘lodging allowance’. Our arrival was greeted with a few days of bad weather. It allowed time to plan our own campaign of investigation but highlighted the need for an ‘office’ of our own to work from, and in, especially during the evenings since normal working hours would not apply.

A meeting with the Island’s Executive Officer was surprisingly fruitful. Explaining the position that Archaeology field staff were deemed ‘quick moving’ by the OS, and not entitled to office accommodation, I pointed out that, unlike

*Norman Quinnell surveying a ring cairn in Devonshire, 1982*
the Field Surveyors’ flat that was presumably rented by the OS, there would be no payment for any room which might be offered to us, but that anything would be most welcome. We were told to return the following day when something would be arranged. Thus we were given a room in the Secondary School. Normally used for music practice, the room was large with a view over Porth Mellon beach. Initially empty, the school caretaker allowed us to rummage in a basement for disused tables, chairs, and even two desk lamps. So by 20 February we had our ‘office’ with keys that allowed access out of school hours. I have always been grateful for the understanding and assistance afforded by the authorities.

All OS staff on Scilly had agreed that to return home at weekends was pointless. There was not enough time and the cost would be prohibitive. Generally there would be continuous working for three or four weeks and then ten or twelve days away, of which two would be travelling days. Nick Attrill lived near Plymouth, John Barton near Winchester while I was near Highbridge, Somerset. With personal preferences, a system developed whereby absences became staggered so that usually two would be working while one was away.

Within a month we had found long-term bed and breakfast accommodation in different parts of Hugh Town and had established a routine. We met at the office at 8am. If working on St Mary’s we would collect the day’s work and get the bus to the nearest point. If working on the off islands, we would write up notes of the previous day before joining the boat queues at 10 – 10.30am. We returned to the office at about 4.30pm and, apart from a meal break between 6.30 and 7.30pm, remained there until 9.30pm, writing reports and penning surveys. The OS had issued a deadline of 31 July when all staff would leave, so, to complete our work, a 12-hour day seemed imperative, though, of course, there was no recompense for the extra hours.

During February and March field work was confined to St Mary’s. There was poor weather and cancellations and irregularities to the inter-island boat services would result in time lost. Wet weather afforded the opportunity for further research at the Museum and its library. While the Archaeology Branch had a fine library of national journals and books it did not extend to many localised or rare ones. (It had always been the policy of the South West Section to research in museums and libraries when facilities and time allowed). Books were borrowed from the island library and that of the Museum, while the latter’s accessions were also recorded. As a result, more than one hundred additional items were noted for investigation, apart from further information on some previously recorded. Perhaps the most rewarding source was Troutbeck’s *Survey of the ancient and present state of the Scilly Islands* (1794), with its wealth of detail on Civil War fortifications.

Archaeology Branch numbered sites consecutively within the relevant OS six-inch (or subsequent 1:10,000) sheet, but a single number could relate to an isolated cairn, for example, or a group of thirty. The latter case would necessitate sub-letters to accompany individual grid references. For each site the research at headquarters (or in the field) was written as brief but fairly comprehensive notes on specially designed forms. To these the field investigator added his report and,
perhaps, photographs. When a large number of sites had been completed, the forms were returned to Archaeology Branch where the reports were edited and typed onto index cards. Surveys for publication were given a descriptive name and passed to the draftsmen of the map production department. Other large-scale surveys, made for archive purposes, were retained by Archaeology Branch. Some sites would go into the record but not be published, particularly those of destroyed monuments and the findspots of artefacts.

Survey equipment was the normal individual issue of a drawing board on which to tape or pin survey plans, tape measures, an optical square and a camera. Usually one carried a few one-metre bamboo canes to use as markers. For the section as a whole there was one plane table and tripod with non-telescopic legs. This was guaranteed to cause problems when being carried on and off crowded boats and therefore infrequently used. With a haversack containing survey items, a notebook, a file comprising all recorded information and perhaps air photographs, lunch and drink, one was well loaded.

Figure 1: an OS ‘495’ record card with a survey by Norman Quinnell of one of a number of entrance graves and cairns on the eastern slope of South Hill, Samson, surveyed in June 1978. (PRN 7081.03) (© Crown copyright. Reproduced courtesy of the National Monument Record)

It was evident that the off islands required priority treatment. From the time of landing to that of collection on the last return boat there would only be a

---

2 The Record Card (also called a ‘495’ because of its OS form number) would go into the archaeology index, with a copy being sent to the relevant county Sites and Monuments Register. Additional cards in the Archaeology Branch might include site photographs and large-scale plans produced during field work.
maximum of five hours available for field work, and that would usually include an hour of walking. Then there was the matter of bracken which starts early in the year and grows rapidly to an alarming height, particularly on the uninhabited islands. Most days there were services to Tresco, St Agnes and St Martin’s, but Samson, Tean, St Helen’s and to some extent Bryher were dependent upon tides and the economics of demand – not enough passengers, no trip. For the lesser islands, Annet, Northwethel and others, we would need to hire a boat ourselves and, since those locations necessitated jumping off the boat, good calm seas were required. Work on St Mary’s was relegated to times when boat services were cancelled and when weather was dull and misty; also, as daylight hours lengthened, field work could be extended into the evenings.

Each surveyor was allotted a complete island, if small, or an area of a large one, with perhaps ten sites to investigate and survey. This could represent a few days’ work, since a single site number might consist of twenty or more cairns or five hundred metres of fortification. The surveys would be on the relevant 1:2500 plans but, considering the time factors, if the surveyor deemed it appropriate for archaeological records, he was free to do additional itemised surveys at a much larger scale; for example, 1:100 or 1:250. Once the initial area was completed, an adjacent one was taken up. The penning of surveys and the reports were undertaken in the evenings or on wet days. Rarely did two persons work together (with the difficulties of survey), and mostly they were on different islands. Everyone had a log book for the details of each day’s work. This would include the island, boat fare, and the number of the site or sites surveyed or the kilometre square in which they fell. The time devoted to evening penning would also be noted, simply for the record as there was no overtime payment.

As i/c section my duties were wider, with responsibility for all administration. A monthly account of section and individual expenses had to be presented to Bristol Regional Office, as had any request for replacement stores. Completed work was invoiced and despatched to Archaeology Branch, who also required a quarterly statement on progress backed by statistics. One task (termed ‘finalling’ by the OS) was to visit and check a percentage of the surveys done by my colleagues and read all field reports, to ensure that they were comprehensive and incorporated information towards a two- or three-word ‘correct’ description, upon which the publication terminology would be based. The above occupied more than half of my time, and the rest was taken up with my share of field work, surveys, reports and penning.

Work progressed smoothly, punctuated by the occasional visit by others who were involved with Scilly. Paul Ashbee had just finished the excavations on Halangy Down (1996); Vivien Russell had almost completed the Isles of Scilly Survey (1980), a parochial check-list, while Professor Charles Thomas was active in excavation and research. In May, Cyril Wardale (i/c Field Sections) of Archaeology Branch, spent a week with us to familiarise himself with our problems.

The difficulty of getting to the small islands was overcome by hiring the Nature Conservancy’s small boat and warden. Annet and Rosewear were covered
on a calm day and, weeks later, the Eastern Isles of Menawethan, Little Ganilly and Great Ganinick. On successive days in June the skipper of the boat bound for St Martin’s was persuaded to divert to Great Ganilly with Nornour, and then Great and Little Arthur; in each case the surveyor jumped onto a suitable shore rock and was collected by the last boat back to St Mary’s. Jumping onto the boat, with equipment, was far more stressful than jumping off, in case one fell on the passengers.

**Details of islands**

**Annet** and **Rosevear** were visited in April before sea bird nesting was advanced. Rosevear was barely within the OS archaeological remit, being a handful of ruined nineteenth-century structures associated with the construction of the Bishop Rock lighthouse. However it was an opportunity to revise the 1906 surveys and report on the remains. Annet had a few small but significant prehistoric remains that hitherto had been unmapped if not entirely unrecorded. Among the Eastern Isles, Little Ganilly showed nothing of archaeological interest although it is 200m across. The rest had from one to fourteen sites, some additional to those previously recorded.

Of the many monuments previously unsurveyed, the most prevalent were prehistoric field systems, sometimes represented by turf-covered banks, at others by lines of stones: ‘boulder walls’. Occasionally, as on Great Ganinick, or on Puffin Island, there was simply a short length of one wall. Such features were difficult to detect when under bracken and their survey became a problem in some areas. John Barton dealt with the fields on St Helen’s when the bracken was under one metre high, but on Samson Attrill and I had a battle to finish surveying the systems as the bracken rose to shoulder height. On Tresco, St Agnes and Bryher conditions were better, but on St Martin’s, which was left rather late in the programme, some areas of field systems were, regretfully, never surveyed. As evidence of inundation, field walls occur below the high water mark on the east side of Samson, of Bryher, and around the southern end of Tresco. Those visible were surveyed at low tide but it was clear that some would, in time be covered by sand and others exposed, so those published are not necessarily apparent today.

**Samson** (with **White Island** and **Puffin Island**) Nick Attrill did the surveys on North Hill, and endeavoured to distinguish and describe the numerous cairns on the ridge, but we worked together on South Hill. Here the OS had previously surveyed and published almost all the ruined houses and fields of the seventeenth- to nineteenth-century occupation but not the underlying and intermixed prehistoric houses and fields. The survey of these was made difficult not just by bracken but by the frighteningly aggressive nature of the black-backed gulls which nest on the southern tip of the island. Everything on Samson was surveyed at 1:2500, and most of the cairns had additional larger scale surveys (figure 1). I do not recall who visited White Island. Although I believe one can reach it at low water, the tide does not retreat enough to walk without some
degree of wading and the reported field walls in the channel were never visible. Walling might now be visible on the island if a visit were made.

Since most prehistoric field boundaries are published as solid lines they cannot be readily distinguished from later walling whenever they occur together, so usually only the later, modern, walls are depicted. Thus on South Hill the prehistoric boundaries are omitted from the published maps.

Bryher was mostly covered by John Barton with some work by me, especially the southern part, including prehistoric settlement, cairns and Civil War earthworks. In the north part of the island, apart from a promontory fort, there was a vast cairnfield with about 150 cairns that had been published on the 1908 25-inch plan (figure 2). A few, large or with cists, are fairly obvious, but the majority are small and easily overlooked. The OS surveyors of 1906 probably had access to George Bonsor’s unpublished work (1899–1901) on the cairns and stone alignments on Scilly, otherwise they would not have bothered to survey them. Certainly there seems to be no other authority to bring them to their attention. It was not until 1974 that Paul Ashbee noted a ‘system of linear cairn cemeteries on Shipman Head Down’. To make the numbers manageable the area was split into several blocks containing from six to 34 cairns. Some have cists and a few have kerbs but most are slight platforms or low mounds. Occasionally some are linked by walls of irregularly spaced boulders or small stones, producing the linear system described by Ashbee. A few cairns emulate the ‘boulder cairns’ on St Agnes, where a natural ‘grounder’ forms the focus against which a semi-circle of stones or a semi-circular platform has been created.

---

Figure 2 Shipman Head, Bryher, on OS 1:2500 published 1908 (NLS)

---

When the Senior Surveyor, Cyril Wardale, paid a week’s visit from Archaeology Branch in May, among sites visited were cairn groups on St Agnes and Bryher. From a degree of scepticism he became convinced enough to write a report on one block (SV81NE1). There are still doubts as to whether some of the small mounds might not be field clearance rather than sepulchral or ritual, or even a combination of both; only excavation could provide some answers. Nevertheless, as it was unlikely that the OS would publish simple clearance cairns, for lack of evidence to the contrary we categorised all cairns as prehistoric and probably associated with burial.

On the north of Bryher the promontory fort had been depicted on the 1908 25-inch map as a wall with slopes to each side but, being uncertain as to what it could be, it was not described or named. Barton revised the feature with an additional representation at 1:500 scale in one and a half hours, but for publication at 1:10,000 it could only be shown as a broad bank. (With walking to the North End and back to the jetty it is unlikely that Barton would have had more than one hour for any other field work that day).

**St Agnes and Gugh** Again, largely dealt with by Barton and myself. A variety of sites, from prehistoric houses, fields and occupation debris to a Civil War battery, maze and kelp pits. The latter were perhaps outside the OS remit, being historical rather than archaeological, but we were anxious to widen the range of antiquities beyond the medieval.

Like Bryher, cairns predominated; some were fine chambered tombs but the majority were small, low, occasionally kerbed and often associated with a grounder or field walls. At HQ a Recording Section had split them into workable groups of ten to twenty cairns and then correlated the information published over the years by a number of authorities who often had different views and totals, or even grid references, which created duplications. An example is the Kittern Hill, Gugh, linear cemetery (SV80NE3). Sixteen cairns had been published on the 2nd edition OS 1:2500 map in 1908 and a further two in 1963 on the Provisional Edition six-inch map. Within the OS SV80NE3 grouping there were five sources of information. During field work Barton found one cairn to be a duplicate in recording, and four were reclassified as hut circles; he found three unlisted cairns and the possible site of another, stripped to cover a modern grave. In total he surveyed 17 cairns but even now sorting them out is fraught with some uncertainty. There may be one site on St Agnes that was not recorded and which we did not see or recognise. Some years later Keith Gardner of Backwell, Bristol, wrote to me saying that he had found, on the extreme southeast part of St Agnes, a length of boulder walling that might represent the fortification of an Iron Age cliff castle. I have never been back to see it.

**Northwethel** The first edition OS 25-inch map of c 1890 showed not only a number of cairns but a sketchy representation of field walls extending over more than one hectare (‘hedges’ had been noted on Northwethel by Borlase in 1756). Though small, the island was visibly bracken infested, so to be sure of completing work in half a day (further boat hire would be excessive) the full section was
employed on 10 June. Barton dealt with the cairns and miscellaneous sites while Attrill and I endeavoured to interpret and survey the field system and possible hut circles in bracken and deep humus. The result was only partially successful since we considered there was probably more we had not found and some we had that might prove irrelevant. Only after a fire would there be reasonable exposure.

**St Helen’s** was mostly the responsibility of Nick Attrill. Not too bad for access: if the tides were right boats took passengers there for a few hours. Apart from revising the published plans of the Pest House and St Helen’s church complex, Attrill was able to survey groups of fields, a possible prehistoric hut platform and four cairns. The latter are ring-type cairns and could be described as huts but for their small size and the lack of entrance gaps. St Helen’s is another island where bracken obscured any further field walls which, with other monuments, may yet await discovery.

**Tean** I visited the island on one day in May and another in June. Chiefly recalled for the fragmentary prehistoric field systems, some submerged at high water, and chambered cairns, one of which was also submerged. There are a few hut circles and one rectilinear structure showing as a depression in the turf. (This does not appear on any map in my possession and I do not have field reports of sites on Tean.)

**St Martin’s** and **White Island** Investigation carried out by Attrill and Barton. I spent only two days on St Martin’s, working on Chapel Down and Burnt Hill, and checking a little of my colleagues’ work. Being left towards the end of our time on Scilly when the bracken was high, the island may not have had the attention it was due. Certainly some areas of field systems did not get surveyed.

**Eastern Isles** Investigated by Attrill and me, Great Ganilly and Nornour in mid June, being dropped from the St Martin’s boat, though field reports were written almost a month later. The tiny islands of Menawethan, Little Ganilly and Great Ganinick were visited in late July, during the last week on Scilly; a small private boat was hired which lay off each island with the boatman while investigation took place. Waiting for a calm sea had caused delay. On these all that was found was a single cairn and a field wall.

On the larger islands were the usual huts, field systems and numerous cairns. Although it seems to be unmentioned in the final records, I recall finding a saddle quern at the base of the cliff at, probably, Arthur Quay. Left where it was, it may have been given a note under ‘miscellaneous information’ and not given a site number. To be alone on the Arthurs on a fine June day was a delight only tempered by the problems of surveying from dubious ‘fixed’ points.

**Round Island** (*figure 3*) was incorporated into one of the Tean days. Before the lighthouse was built three cairns had been recorded: there was a faint possibility that some remains survived but nothing was found during the ten minutes spent scouring the small area of the top of the island unencumbered by buildings.
Tresco The island was often served by two boats a day to the southern Crow Point quay or, on occasions of high tides, to New Grimsby. From Crow Point it was a two-mile walk to the northern part of Tresco where the archaeology was densest. Field work was done in March, April and May but the major part in July. It amounted to about twenty seven days, of which Barton did four, Attrill eleven and I did twelve; the latter included some ‘finalling’ or checking of colleagues’ work.

Southern Tresco presented no problems save the tidal ones when dealing with the foreshores of Appletree Bay and Bathinghouse Porth. Here round houses and field walls were visible between high and low water marks and more were surveyed north of Appletree Point. As elsewhere, scouring and sand drift means that, of those published, more or less may be visible at any given time. I have been told that we missed some walling – it simply wasn’t visible at the time and we had not the luxury of being able to re-visit any site. However, there seems to have been an omission at Oliver’s Battery since, a year later, an Ancient Monuments Inspector recorded an earlier pentagonal fort visible as sand ramparts below the level of the Battery.

Northwards of Old and New Grimsby from Dial Rocks through Castle Down and Tregarthen Hill there was extensive evidence of prehistoric occupation: settlements with houses and field walls (figure 4), chambered cairns and cairnfields. The latter were gathered into manageable groups as on Bryher and St Agnes. Many had been depicted on the early 25-inch plans but it was not easy to
identify which: some could not be found, others were not on the plan. In one
group, twenty five are shown on the 1908 25-inch map. In 1978 seven were not
found in their published positions but eight were identified elsewhere, making a
total of twenty six. It is unlikely that there had been any modern interference in
the area, so it was either erroneous plotting by the surveyor or later by a
draftsman. Even in 1978 there were few points on which to base surveys, and if
items appeared to be correctly positioned time was not wasted in proving the
cases.

Figure 4. Four houses and a lyncheted field system extending over an area 300m
by 50m above Gimble Porth, Tresco, surveyed in April 1978. Vegetation was a
major problem on many sites on Scilly during the Ordnance Survey revision and
Norman Quinnell described these features in his record of the site as ‘encumbered
by bracken’.
(PRN 7285) (© Crown copyright. Reproduced courtesy of the National Monument Record.)

The depiction on the 25-inch map of c1890 of a field using stone symbols
instead of the normal solid lines for boundaries led Barton to the Dial Rocks
settlement of round houses, middens and fields. Partly destroyed by modern
enclosures, even now it appears to exceed eight hectares in area and, as Barton
noted, part at least is later than a long linear bank on the west side of Castle
Down. Other largely unrecorded settlements were found in the area of Castle
Down Brow.

A further two very different items had, surprisingly, not been identified in the
past. In 1754 Borlase⁴ published a description and illustration of a ‘stone circle
and altar’ on Tresco but with no siting information (figure 5). This was resolved

⁴ W Borlase, Observations on the antiquities historical and monumental of the county of
Cornwall, Oxford, 1754, p189.
by a quick search of the Borlase manuscripts in the Morrab Library, Penzance, where it was found that his notes gave both direction and distance from King Charles’ Castle, as well as a sketch of the monument.

![Image of Borlase’s sketch](image)

*Figure 5: William Borlase’s sketch of the ‘stone circle and altar’ on Tresco*

With this information it was soon identified and surveyed though someone in Archaeology Branch subsequently decided it should not be published on the OS map; rather annoying since it is an unusual monument. The second item was the extensive earthen outwork to King Charles’ Castle, cutting across the whole of the north of the island and probably to be dated to the 1550s.

**St Mary’s** As mentioned earlier, much of St Mary’s was dealt with spasmodically, on days when it was impractical to go to other islands or when the weather was poor. Of about 160 recorded sites, 130 of a wide variety necessitated field work. The others were unresolvable, mostly stray finds of artefacts for which there was no accurate provenance. These were known as ‘marginals’ since they were noted in a column down the right hand side of the Record Sheet. One major site was the complex of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman period settlement excavated at Halangy by Paul Ashbee, with its houses, fields and cairns.

More difficult was the identification of the numerous Civil War earthworks. Troutbeck[^5] in his Survey gives broad descriptions of batteries, redoubts and breastworks, the latter being the most troublesome. Some had evidently been destroyed by coastal erosion, while other intermittent stretches of low cliff-top bank may have had some other purpose and were accepted with a slight degree of doubt. By contrast the multi-period fortifications of the Garrison had been accurately plotted for us at 1:2500 from air photographs; it was simply a matter of compiling an adequate report on their chronology and condition.

St Mary’s was interesting in its variety, even if the occasional site was puzzling. An example is Giants Castle. Apart from a rise in sea level there must have been a massive amount of cliff erosion since there is but a few square metres of cliff top rock on the seaward side of the ramparts; nothing that is now defensible.

Leaving Scilly

On Monday 31 July 1978 we set about the packing of our OS material and dismantling the contents of the office, returning furniture, desk lamps and other items to the school’s basement store. (The other OS surveyors were similarly engaged, though all their furniture, cabinets, lamps and equipment, was OS property and was to be shipped back to the mainland on the Scillonian on the following day.) We departed by helicopter on 1 August, all with enough accumulated leave, in lieu of weekend work, to have the rest of the week at home. Thereafter work was resumed on Dartmoor from where we had left it five and a half months ago. There had been no mishaps, such as missing a last boat back to St Mary’s. One temporary scare had been in the first month, when one member returned from work well after nightfall, having been marooned on Toll’s Island, St Mary’s, until the tide receded. The hours, from 8am to 9 or 10pm, were long but the work was thoroughly interesting and the people most friendly. I suspect the boatmen were relieved by our departure – no more taking up two seats, one for equipment, and no more pleas for diversions to tiny islands during normal trips.

The Executive’s Office helped in various ways, even with photocopying. The Honorary Museum Curator and assistants provided extended access; landladies produced excellent accommodation and accepted our curious working patterns. There were those who assisted when plied with archaeological queries: the late Paul Ashbee, the late Miss Vivien Russell and Professor Charles Thomas, who not only visited but supplied copies of his own research. Finally and not least is the debt owed to the headmaster, staff and caretaker of the School, especially Mrs Mackenzie, who so kindly gave up the practice room of her music class so that it could be our office.

Appendix: some notes concerning the Scillonian surveys

The first OS survey of the Isles of Scilly, with plans at 1:2500 scale, was published in 1889–1890. From these plans the 1:10,560 (six-inch) maps were drawn. Later, from the six-inch maps, the two-and-a-half inch maps were created. There was a revision of the 25-inch in 1906 and the plans redrawn as the Second Edition, published in 1908, followed by a Second Edition six-inch. In 1958 there was some minor, partial, revision, published in 1963 as a Provisional Edition six-inch with a National Grid base. A two-and-a-half-inch (1:25,000) map was produced in 1964.

Following the 1978 revision, the six-inch sheets were in 1980 replaced by the metric 1:10,000 sheets, with some slight changes to the coverage. There are now six sheets instead of the previous eight but this means one sheet may contain elements of several of the previous ones; for example, one has parts of SV80NE, 81SE, 90NW and 91SW. The revised two-and-a-half-inch of 1982 was unaffected in this respect, save for a useful inset of Hugh Town at 1:10,000 scale.

Archaeology Branch, disbanded in 1983, adapted the current sheet numbering by cutting and mounting them so that the new Record Sheets conformed to the old numbers. Presumably the system continues with the successors to
Archaeology Branch, firstly the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) and now the National Archaeological Record of English Heritage.

**Air photographs and the production of maps and plans**

The Admiralty made an air survey of the islands in October 1974 but this was purely for tides and updating charts. The OS made their air photography survey in June 1976 with photographs produced at 1:2500 scale to update all the old County Series 25-inch plans. The OS Photogrammetry Section plotted all the details from these photos, creating a series of updated 25-inch plans, each covering an area of one square kilometre. These were issued to the Field Surveyors, who then checked them on the ground, adding and deleting detail as necessary – appearances from the air can be deceptive. Names had to be written on the plans and also a series of codes to denote types of vegetation and other features for use by draftsmen when the completed field work was returned to Southampton. The 1:10,000 plans were treated similarly.

Archaeology Branch surveyors did not have the above documents to work on, only the 1908 25-inch sheets, gridded and cut to one square kilometre size. Surveys were done on these and then transferred to the Field Surveyors’ 25-inch or 1:10,000 plans as appropriate. We either borrowed them for a short while or went to their office, which had been a flat attached to the school, very close to us.

**Publications and omissions**

It took two years from the completion of field work to publication of the 1:10,000 maps and about four years until the two-and-a-half-inch Leisure Map appeared.

Archaeology Branch had small sections responsible for the processing of returned field work; this included decisions on what should be published at different scales and the descriptive names. Material was then forwarded to the OS Department of Map Production and the draftsmen for whom archaeology was a minor part of their task. There seems to have been no system of proof reading by Archaeology Branch before printing started. Generally the popular two-and-a-half-inch Leisure Map (the last produced) is a direct reduction of the 1:10,000 survey except for lettering which has to be larger and is therefore more restricted in application. Even so, some items may be obscured or omitted on a 1:10,000 sheet.

Examples occur (on SV81NE) on North Tresco. The name ‘Castle Down Brow’ has necessitated the omission of three hut circles. Another, and part of an adjacent field system, had to give place to the descriptions ‘Settlement & Field System’ and ‘Battery (remains of)’. Again on North Tresco there is a line of pits noted as ‘Old Tin Workings’. These were surveyed on the 1908 25-inch and retained in 1978. The pits are not shown on the 1963 six-inch or the 1980 1:10,000 although the description remains. For lack of room nothing has been shown on any two-and-a-half-inch. Occasionally an erroneous symbol has been used. Just north of Higher Town, St Agnes, the hut circle of ‘Hut Circle & Field System’ is shown with a cairn symbol; a similar item occurs on Samson and a thorough perusal would probably produce others.
On a Record Card there is a heading box in which the descriptive name is given when publication is required; for example, ‘Battery’. A cross (‘X’) in the box means not to be published. For good reasons it was decided that kelp pits were of historical, if not of archaeological, interest. On Bryher and St Mary’s they are named ‘Old Kelp Pit’ in ordinary type face, yet two on Gugh are completely ignored, evidence of inconsistency.

The most serious errors, because they are obvious on the ground, are the omissions by OS draftsmen, and consequently from the published maps, of surveyed cairns in the large cairn groups. A group of up to four cairns is shown correctly but above that number only about half are portrayed; it is not a matter of restricted space since they are mostly in areas unencumbered by other detail.

On Shipman Head, Bryher, 113 cairns were surveyed but only 46 published. On north Tresco, 63 were surveyed and 34 published. Together, on Tresco, Bryher and St Agnes, of 254 cairns surveyed on the field maps, only 132 were transferred to the publication maps. This of course makes a complete nonsense on the ground; not only can you rarely establish a specific cairn on the map, one cannot use them to find one’s position on the ground. That Archaeology Branch authorised the publication of them all is clear by reference to the box on the Record Cards. Since there is unlikely to be another revision for a century, these gross errors remain for posterity.

All information recorded on the Record Sheets was transferred to the 1:10,000 scale when published and thereafter kept updated as far as possible. At Archaeology Branch the old six-inch Field Sheets and Record Sheets were most probably destroyed. (With the advent of ‘digitisation’ OS maps of 1:10,000 or larger are probably more simplified, and the former Archaeology Branch Record Cards at the National Archaeological Record have, I believe, been slimmed in content when computerised, though the originals are archived). All updated material retained by the author was transferred at the end of 2004 to the Museum on the Isles of Scilly and contains material not otherwise available: this includes a listing of all cairns not published on the 1:10,000 maps.

**Norman Victor Quinnell**

After serving as an air navigator with the RAF during and following WW2, Quinnell joined the OS as a cartographer in 1947. In 1951 he was recruited into the OS Archaeology Division; and thus began a long career as an archaeological field investigator. In an obituary published in 2008, his friend and colleague Martin Fletcher wrote: ‘His duties involved the precise survey and diagnostic interpretation of archaeological monuments for their depiction on large scale OS plans. It is fair to say that if a monument was not shown on an OS plan, then legally it did not exist. The challenge for Norman and his colleagues was therefore to ensure that as much archaeological detail as possible was surveyed and depicted. The result was that users of the OS large-scale plans such as planning authorities, farmers and builders were aware of their existence, especially in urban areas where rapid development was occurring at the time. Large numbers of previously unrecorded monuments were identified and surveyed by Norman and his colleagues; arguably many owe their very
survival to their depiction on these plans. The archaeological symbols and
descriptors such as ‘tumulus’, ‘earthwork’, ‘Roman Road’ that are so familiar to all
users of the smaller scale OS maps, were the by-products of the archaeological
recording and large-scale survey undertaken by the OS archaeological field
investigators.

‘He was a caring curator of things that came into his possession. His
collections were greatly augmented by his distrust of the higher echelons of the
organisations for which he worked, which meant that he retained copies of large
quantities of field work. His archaeological surveys and reports will remain a fine
testimony to his commitment and dedication to the work he loved.’

Quinnell’s widow, Mrs Henrietta Quinnell, is a former President and now Vice
President of the Cornish Archaeological Society (H.Quinnell@exeter.ac.uk).

References from the original article in ‘Cornish Archaeology’
P Ashbee, Ancient Scilly: from the first farmers to the early Christians. An
P Ashbee, ‘George Bonser, an archaeological pioneer from Spain on Scilly’,
P Ashbee, ‘Halangy Down, St Mary’s, Isles of Scilly: excavations 1964–1977’,
W Borlase, Observations on the antiquities historical and monumental, of the
county of Cornwall, Oxford, 1754.
W Borlase, Observations on the ancient and present state of the Islands of Scilly,
Oxford, 1756.
M Bowden, and A Brodie, Defending Scilly, Swindon (English Heritage), 2011
H O’N Hencken, ‘Notes on the megalithic monuments in the Isles of Scilly’,
NV Quinnell, ‘A 16th century outwork to King Charles’ Castle, Tresco’, Cornish
V Russell, Isles of Scilly survey, St Mary’s and Redruth, 1980.
J Troutbeck, A survey of the ancient and present state of the Scilly Islands,
Sherborne, 1794.

---