The Landmark Trust

LOWER PORTHMEOR

History Album

Researched and written by Charlotte Haslam, 1989

Re-presented in 2015

BASIC DETAILS

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**The Farmhouse (Inside House) built c.1800
for David Berryman.**

**Farm acquired by National Trust 1987,
buildings leased to Landmark Trust.**

**Architect for restoration: Peter Bird of
Caroe & Martin**

Contractor: W. Lawry

Foreman: Greville Riggs

Work completed November 1989

Porthmeor means great (meor) cove or landing place (porth). Sometimes Polmeor can mean great pool.

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Summary - Lower Porthmeor: The Captain's House, the Farmhouse & Arra Venton

You will no longer find a village called Porthmeor on a map and the name has passed instead to one of Cornwall's most famous surfing beaches, a few miles round the headland in St Ives. Lower Porthmeor, in its grouping and siting and the forces that have gone into its continuation, is representative of many other hamlets on this northern shelf of Penwith, and is also among the most attractive of all the groups of buildings along a visually staggering stretch of coast.

Apart from the fact of its existence, we know nothing for certain about the hamlet's appearance before 1600, at the earliest. The likelihood is that the settlement would have been laid out in a similar way to today, but on a much smaller scale, with tiny yards and enclosures. The earliest houses would have been little different from the humble single storey building on the north of the site, with a single door and two tiny windows. The cow-houses and other agricultural buildings would have been like that next to it.

Houses excavated at Mawgan Porth near Newquay of the 8th or 9th century were found to have been of this kind, although there the walls were constructed in the same manner as Cornish hedges - two skins of stone, with packed clay or earth between. Sometimes there would have been a sleeping loft, sometimes they may have conformed to the 'long-house' pattern, with the outer room acting as a byre for animals.

We shudder with discomfort at the thought of living in such structures today, and certainly, as soon as wealth permitted, they were improved on. Yet they were solid and well-insulated, providing warmth as well as shelter. As a building type they endured for over a thousand years, well into the 17th century.

It was not until then that the prosperity that had brought about the boom in vernacular house construction known as Great Rebuilding reached this westernmost peninsula, a century later than other parts of the country. Then the older houses started to be rebuilt, with an additional storey, or new windows perhaps, and another room built on the end. As with their predecessors, few of these survive, having vanished when they themselves were rebuilt, unless put to new use as a farm building, or kept on as the dwelling of a labourer or poor relation. A garden wall at Higher Porthmeor is in fact part of another such house, of quite a substantial kind. The Upper House at Higher Porthmeor also bears witness to its 17th-century origin, with a lintel carved with the date 1682. No doubt other fragments have been reused in later buildings, such as window lintels, and dressed stone quoins.

The other great improvement by the 17th century was the chimney. None of this date survive, as such, at Porthmeor, but a method of construction was developed which endured into the 20th century, with very little change apart from the disappearance after 1700 of a chamfered edge on the great stones of the fireplace surrounds. Both the Captain's House and The Farmhouse has one of these huge projecting chimneypieces, and they occur in most of the other farms along the coast. Matthews in 1892 remarked of them: 'Here may still be commonly seen the immense open chimney, with dried furze and turf piled up on the earthen floor of the kitchen.'

None of the houses at Lower Porthmeor dates from before the end of the 18th century. Even then few houses in Penwith were built with two full storeys; the pattern remained that of a single storey with a now rather more spacious loft. So the house nearest the road – now known as The Captain's House - contains within its larger end a smaller and lower house, the roofline of which was found in the walls when plaster was stripped off in 1988. This could date from 1800 or even a bit before. However the Tithe Apportionment Map for Zennor of 1842, although it lists a house and garden here, only shows what seems to be a smaller building again, hardly even a house. The National Trust's Vernacular Buildings Surveyors have suggested that this was because the house was only then being built - and such are the difficulties of dating, a range of fifty years either way is quite acceptable.

The house that almost certainly does date from soon after 1800 is The Farmhouse, which is clearly marked on the Tithe Map of 1842. It also appears in the first edition of the 1' Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1805, although not published until 1813. The leap in terms of civilisation from the earlier houses is immense.

The Farmhouse has been little altered, but The Captain's House, has gone through a number of different stages. First there was the small house already described. Then a building was added onto its lower end, blocking a window in the gable. It is thought that the new building began life as a cow-house, because a drain runs out of it directly under one of the sides of the fireplace, which must therefore be a later addition, to convert this end into a house as well. A house it certainly was in 1860 when Arthur Berryman (known to family tradition as Captain Arthur) was born there. Soon afterwards, however, the upper end was enlarged, with a full second storey added. The family moved in there, and the lower end became a cow-house or stable again, and has remained so. This had happened by the time of the 1881 census, when an uninhabited house was recorded.

The other farm buildings at Lower Porthmeor are all 19th century. The long cow-house, running uphill from The Farmhouse, is marked on the 1842 Tithe Map. It already had a granary (locally called a barn or chall-barn) at the top end. On the upper floor of this the grain was stored, while cows lived below. Another cow-house, known as the Four-house for obvious numerical reasons, was added in the later 19th century by Robert Berryman, Captain Arthur's father. Robert Berryman also built the very charming, and rather grand, barn (i.e. granary) immediately next to the Farmhouse, probably in about 1880. Its cambered lintels may, perhaps, have been reused from another building. It had a pig-house on its lower end, and there was another pig-house, now roofless, at the other side of the yard.

Lower Porthmeor also has an important literary connection, since author Virginia Woolf passed the summer of 1910 here, lodging with the Berryman family. Virginia Woolf had spent happy childhood holidays in St Ives with the rest of her family – her parents Leslie and Julia Stevens owned Talland House above Porthminster Beach. After Julia’s death in 1895, this house was let out, but St Ives and Cornwall were always a place of recuperation for Virginia, who suffered recurrent bouts of depression and nervous exhaustion. It was to recover from one such that she came to stay at Lower Porthmeor, aged 28, in 1910. With Jean Thomas, her carer- companion, she went for long walks over the moors. Virginia Woolf’s later novels *The Voyage Out* (1915), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1937) and *Between the Acts* (1941) all draw directly from her memories of Cornwall.

ARRA VENTON

Across the road from The Captain’s House and The Farmhouse is Arra Venton, a building of somewhat mixed parentage. It was once two buildings, a tiny NonConformist chapel and a smithy, both as satisfying in their simple granite construction as the farmsteads. Early in the 20th century, a cottage was added to its smithy end. In 1952, these three buildings were combined in an eccentric if imaginative fashion into a single dwelling. Soon after, it was altered again, and treated and painted in such a way that it rather spoiled the elemental landscape of which it is a part and, felt our founder, spoilt the outlook from the farmsteads across the road. So when it came on the market, he bought it to protect the grouping as whole (we would not be able to do so today) and restored it, to make it simple and unified again, looking out upon sea and wide moorland under the ever-changing Cornish skies.

Historical Background

There are few parts of the British Isles where Archaeology is so visible to the layman as it is in Penwith. This is especially so in those parishes on its northern coast called the ‘high countries’, Zennor, Towednack and Morvah. Here much of the land is rough moor, among which successive early peoples chose to dwell. Amid such profusion of ancient culture it is easy to forget the population of more recent centuries whose main contribution, it seems, has been to leave all this archaeology intact for us today - to the extent of using the same fields and field walls. Throughout the millennium and a half since the end of the Iron Age, people have continued to live and farm here. They have developed a way of life that, although it has much in common with other remote and upland areas, is at the same time distinctive of this peninsula alone.

It is only in the last decade that the full complexity of this rich landscape has begun to be studied in detail and on a longer timescale, fuelled by new interest in the fields of vernacular architecture, and industrial and post-medieval archaeology. All of this has been greatly encouraged by the National Trust, which has given this area special attention and, with the Cornwall Archaeological Unit, has carried out a detailed survey of its holding at Bosigran, from pre-history to the present day.

There are some enormous difficulties to be encountered in carrying out any such study. The poverty of the area is one - the buildings were always humble, and lacking in ornament, which makes them hard to date. The intractability of the material that was nearest to hand - moorstone granite - also contributed to the plain-ness of the buildings, coupled with the perishability of others such as thatch. Both of these in turn contributed to the final muddling factor - that whenever an increase in prosperity did allow a new building, it generally occupied the site, and consumed the materials, of its predecessor. Thus whenever earlier fragments do survive, they are often no longer in the right place.

On the other hand those same characteristics caused the continuation of customs and practices long after they had been superseded in wealthier parts of the country, even on the south coast of Penwith. To some extent it is true to say that the Middle Ages lasted into the 17th, and even 18th century here. J. H. Matthews writing a *History of St. Ives, Lelant, Towednack and Zennor* in 1892, was able to say of the 'high countries' that they preserved 'much of the social aspect of former ages.'

So while almost no buildings can be dated to before the 16th or 17th centuries, it is possible to draw conclusions about their predecessors from the very few structures of this later period that do survive. One such survival, possibly 17th-century, stands at the top of the Lower Porthmeor settlement. Known as Grace's House, it was until recently kept thatched, and its bakehouse chimney whitewashed. Another, more ruinous, is in the former Mill Farm in the valley below. Of a single storey, with tiny windows, these buildings resemble the black houses of Scotland. Although themselves post-medieval, they reflect a long tradition of similar humble dwellings, in which even the better-off members of local society would have lived throughout the Middle Ages. They also provide some link with those farmhouses of an even earlier period, the courtyard houses of Romano-British settlements like Chysauster.

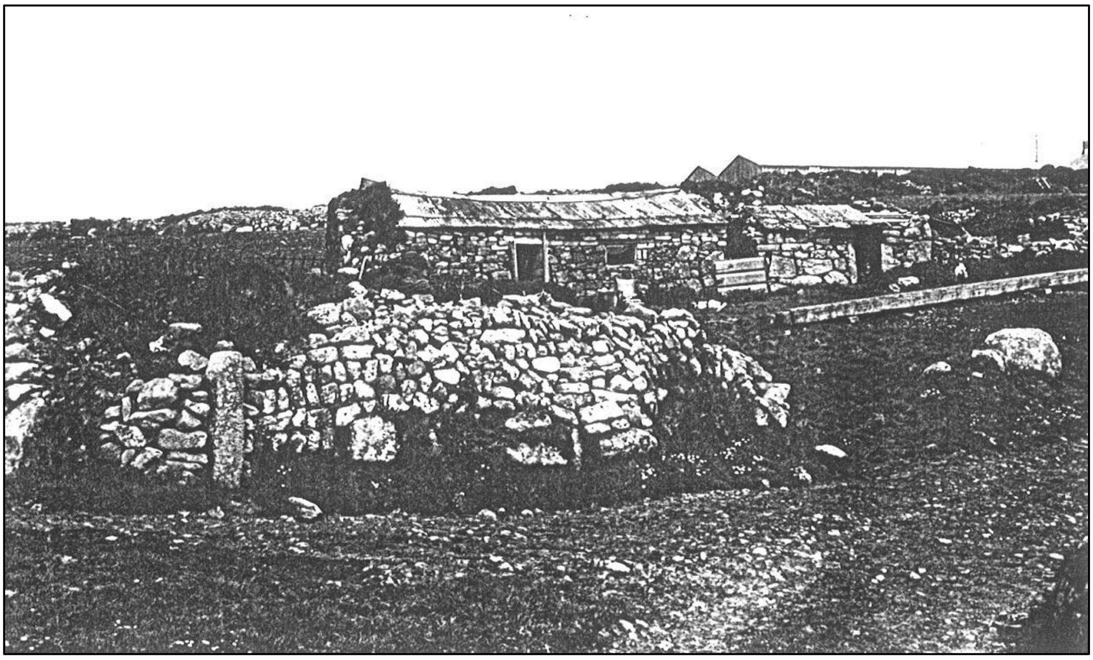
At what date the farmers from these settlements moved to the ones occupied today is not known for certain. Not all early settlements were on high ground, two having been located among the fields on the coastal shelf at Bosigran for example. That associated with the fields of Porthmeor is higher up the hill in a field called Dinnis = Dynas, a fortified place (which gave Lt Col F.C. Hirst the clue to look for it). It is likely that the move to the new site, close to two springs, and sheltered from the south and east, took place soon after the end of the Roman period. Certainly a settlement called Porthmur (the variants on its name are inevitably many) existed in the early 14th century.

In the new sites, as in the old, the houses were still built close together in hamlets, as many as five or six together. This is a custom that has lasted to within living memory in Penwith, although eroded in this century by depopulation and the consolidation of farms. In very early times the impulse may have been partly security, but there must also have been an element of sharing in it, especially of farming activities, such as harvesting. In recent centuries buildings sometimes seem to have had a communal use too; each house had its own garden and pig-house, but as time progressed it did not necessarily have its own complete set of barns, yards and cow-houses. Several houses could be grouped around a single farmyard complex.

Whether the hamlets represent the holding of a single farming family is not clear. In such a case the land would only be divided nominally, with separate dwellings for different generations, siblings or cousins, but a common living. This was an established pattern in another remote westerly county, Merioneth in North Wales, where among the gentry of the early 17th century a pattern grew up that has been labelled the ‘unit-system.’ New houses were built close together but distinct from one another - a house for each household, rather than multiple occupation of a single building.

It has been suggested that the unit-system was a way of still following, but at the same time limiting the economic defects of multiple inheritance, or gavelkind, banned by Queen Elizabeth 1. It is easy to imagine something of the same happening in Penwith. Certainly in the 19th century many of the hamlets were occupied by different members of the same family. Porthmeor then was farmed by three brothers, who each owned a separate holding, but their descendants today talk about it as though it was always one farm, with the men of each household sharing the work. The pattern can be seen again on many farms now, as the farmer's son sets up his own self-contained home.

On the other hand it was comparatively rare in Penwith, unlike Wales, for the occupant also to be the owner of the land, even in the 19th century. Most farms belonged to a larger estate, and were held by leases based on lives. Sometimes the landlord lived in one of the manor houses of Penwith itself, such as Trenwith or Trevetho, but just as often through complicated transfers and descent they belonged to an estate whose owner lived far away. This might either be at the other end of Cornwall or in another part of the country altogether - the Paulet family owned land in Penwith, although the majority of their estates were in Hampshire and Yorkshire. Part of Porthmeor, which exceptionally was largely owned by its farmers, at one time belonged to the Lanhydrock estate - as in a sense it does again today, Lanhydrock being the National Trust Regional Headquarters.



Early house and shippon (cattle shed) at the top of Lower Porthmeor, known as Grace's House. The enclosure in the foreground was a garden.

Lower Porthmeor–the buildings

Porthmeor, in its grouping and siting and the forces that have gone into its continuation, is representative of many other hamlets on this northern shelf of Penwith; and is besides among the most attractive of all the groups of buildings along a visually staggering stretch of coast.

Apart from the fact of its existence, we know nothing for certain about its appearance before 1600, at the earliest. The likelihood is that the settlement would have been laid out in a similar way to today, but on a much smaller scale, with tiny yards and enclosures. As has already been said the earliest houses would not have been so very different from the humble single storey building above Lower Porthmeor, with a single door and two tiny windows. The cow-houses and other agricultural buildings would have been like that next to it.

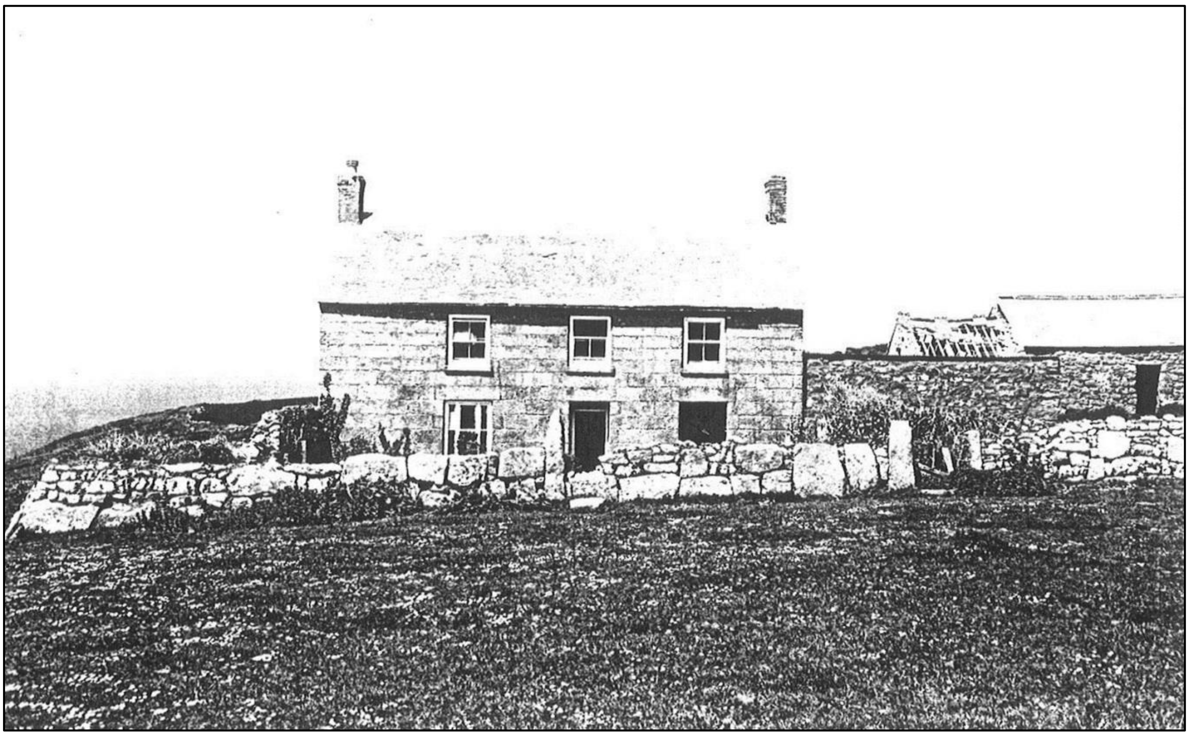
Houses excavated at Mawgan Porth near Newquay of the 8th or 9th century were found to have been of this kind, although there the walls were constructed in the same manner as the Cornish hedges - two skins of stone, with packed clay or earth between. Sometimes there would have been a sleeping loft, sometimes they may have conformed to the ‘long-house’ pattern, with the outer room acting as a byre. Again, examples have been recorded, at Lanyon in Morvah parish for instance.

We shudder with discomfort at the thought of living in such structures, and certainly, as soon as wealth permitted, they were improved on. But they were solid and well insulated, providing warmth as well as shelter, and there may have been ways of keeping them dry that we no longer know about in this age of damp-inducing concrete. And as a building type they endured for over a thousand years, through the Elizabethan period and well into the 17th century.

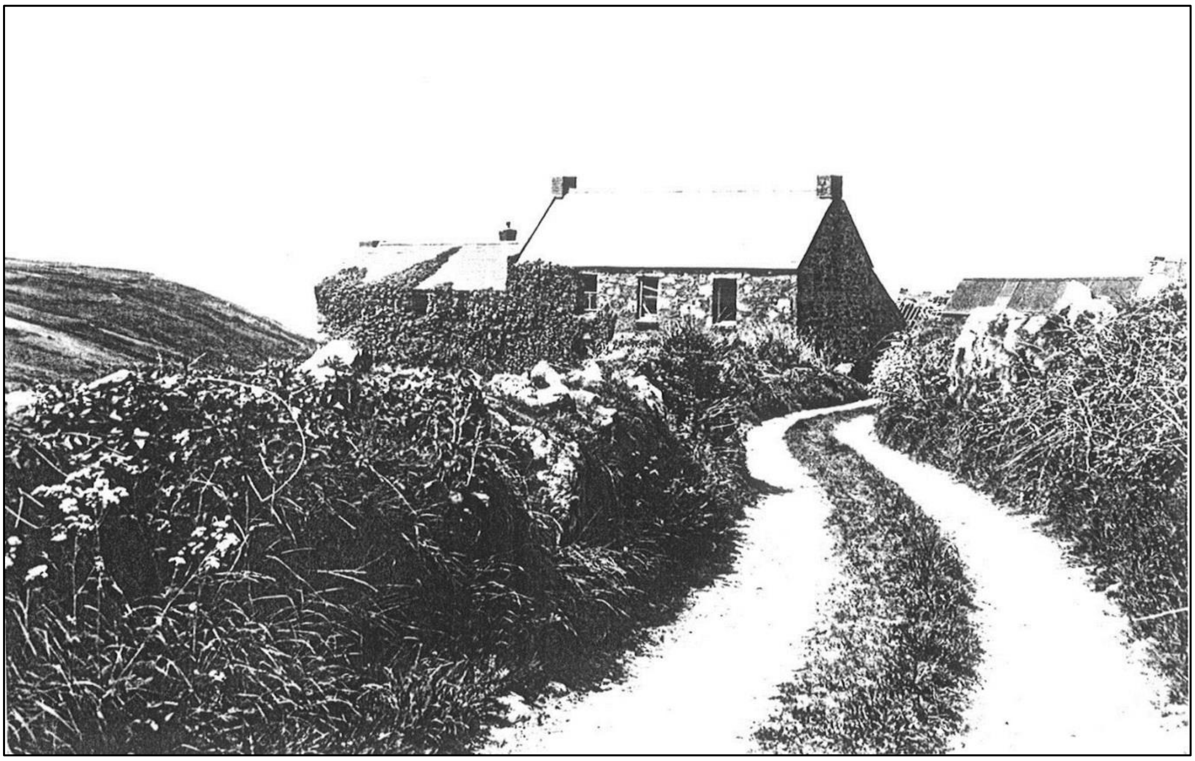
It was not until then that the prosperity that had brought about the great rebuilding a century earlier in other parts of the country reached this westernmost peninsula. Then the older houses started to be rebuilt, with an additional storey, or new windows perhaps, and another room built on the end. As with their predecessors, few of these survive, having vanished when they themselves were rebuilt, unless put to new use as a farm building, or kept on as the dwelling of a labourer or poor relation. There was at Bosigran, in a very ruinous condition, one house that dated from this transitional period, with a single mullioned window, but this was pulled down a few years ago. And a garden wall at Higher Porthmeor is in fact part of another such house, of quite a substantial kind. The Upper House at Higher Porthmeor also bears witness to a 17th-century origin, with a lintel carved with the date 1682. No doubt other fragments have been reused in later buildings, such as window lintels, and dressed stone quoins.

The other great improvement of the 17th century was the chimney. None of this date survives, as such, at Porthmeor, but a method of construction was developed which endured into the 20th century, with very little change apart from the disappearance after 1700 of a chamfered edge on the great stones of the fireplace surrounds. Each of the three houses at Lower Porthmeor (not counting Grace's house) has one of these huge projecting chimneypieces, and they occur in most of the other farms along the coast. Matthews in 1892 remarked of them: ‘Here may still be commonly seen the immense open chimney, with dried furze and turf piled up on the earthen floor of the kitchen.’

None of these houses at Lower Porthmeor dates from before the end of the 18th century. Even then few houses in Penwith were built with two full storeys; the pattern remained that of a single storey with a now rather more spacious loft. So the house nearest the road - known as the Outside House - contains within its larger end a smaller and lower house, the roofline of which was found in the walls when plaster was stripped off in 1988. This could date from 1800 or even a bit before. However the Tithe Apportionment Map for Zennor of 1842,



Above, the Inside House (1987) and below, the Outside House

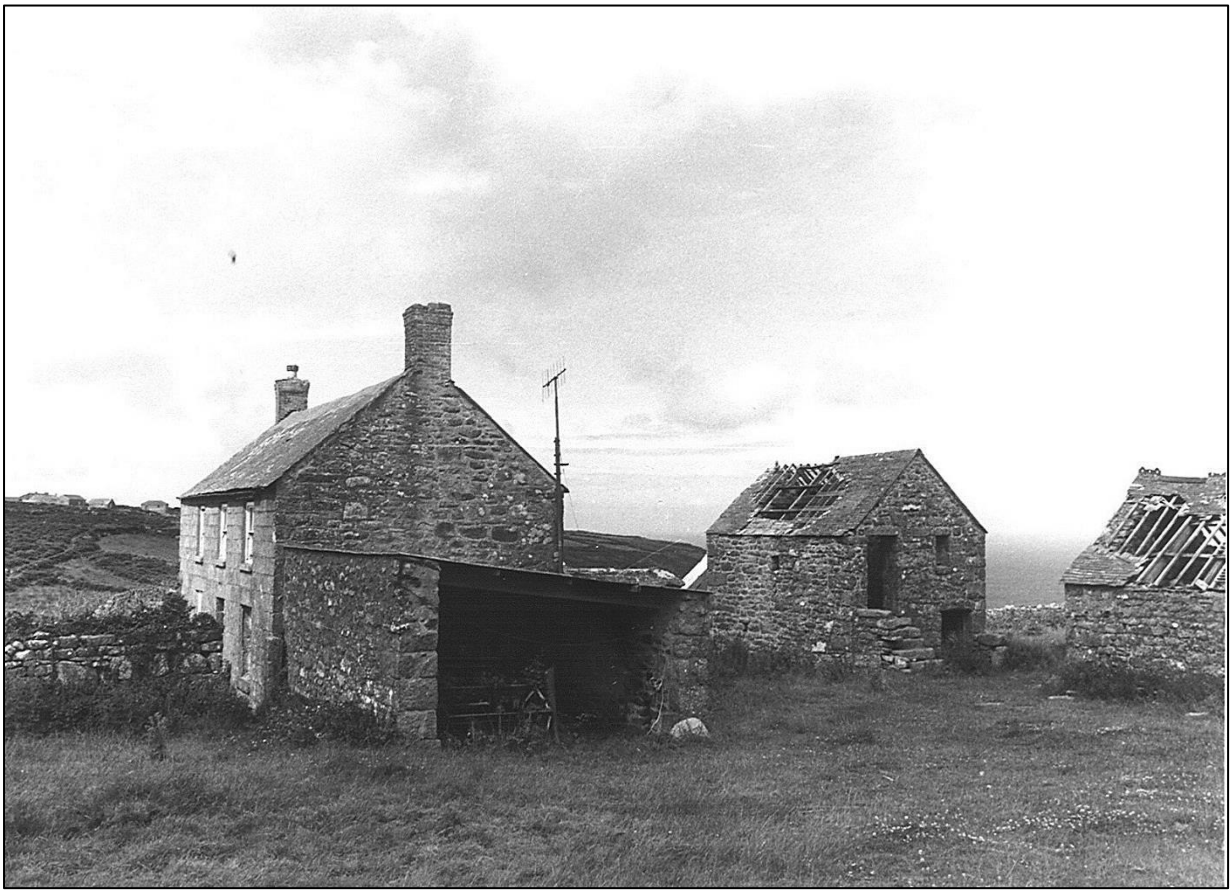


although it lists a House and Garden here, only shows what seems to be a smaller building again, hardly even a house. The National Trust's Vernacular Buildings Surveyors have suggested that this was because the house was only then being built - and such are the difficulties of dating, a range of fifty years either way is quite acceptable.

The house that almost certainly does date from soon after 1800 is the Inside House, now the Landmark. This is most clearly marked on the Tithe Map of 1842. It also appears in the first edition of the 1′ Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1805 although not published until 1813. The leap in terms of civilisation from the earlier houses to this is so immense, that the reasons for it will be looked at in more detail later on.

The Inside House has been little altered, but its companion, the Outside House, has gone through a number of different stages. First there was the small house already described. Then a building was added onto its lower end, blocking a window in the gable. It is thought that the new building began life as a cow-house, because a drain runs out of it directly under one of the sides of the fireplace, which must therefore be a later addition, to convert this end into a house as well. A house it certainly was in 1860 when Arthur Berryman (known to family tradition as Captain Arthur) was born there. Soon afterwards, however, the upper end was enlarged, with a full second storey added. The family moved in there, and the lower end became a cow-house or stable again, and has remained so. This had happened by the time of the 1881 census, when an uninhabited house was recorded.

The farm buildings of Lower Porthmeor are all 19th century. The long cow-house, running uphill from the Inside House, is marked on the 1842 Tithe Map. It already had a granary (locally called a barn or chall-barn) at the top end. On the upper floor of this the grain was stored, while cows lived below. Another cow-



Robert Berryman's barn and (on the right of the picture) Four-house, with cart-house on the end of the Inside House, taken down in 1988

house, known as the Four-house for obvious numerical reasons, was added in the later 19th century by Robert Berryman, Captain Arthur's father. Robert Berryman also built the very charming, and rather grand, barn (i.e. granary) immediately next to the Inside House, probably in about 1880. Its cambered lintels may, perhaps, have been reused from another building. It had a pig-house on its lower end, and there was another pig-house, now roofless, at the other side of the yard.

Owners of Porthmeor

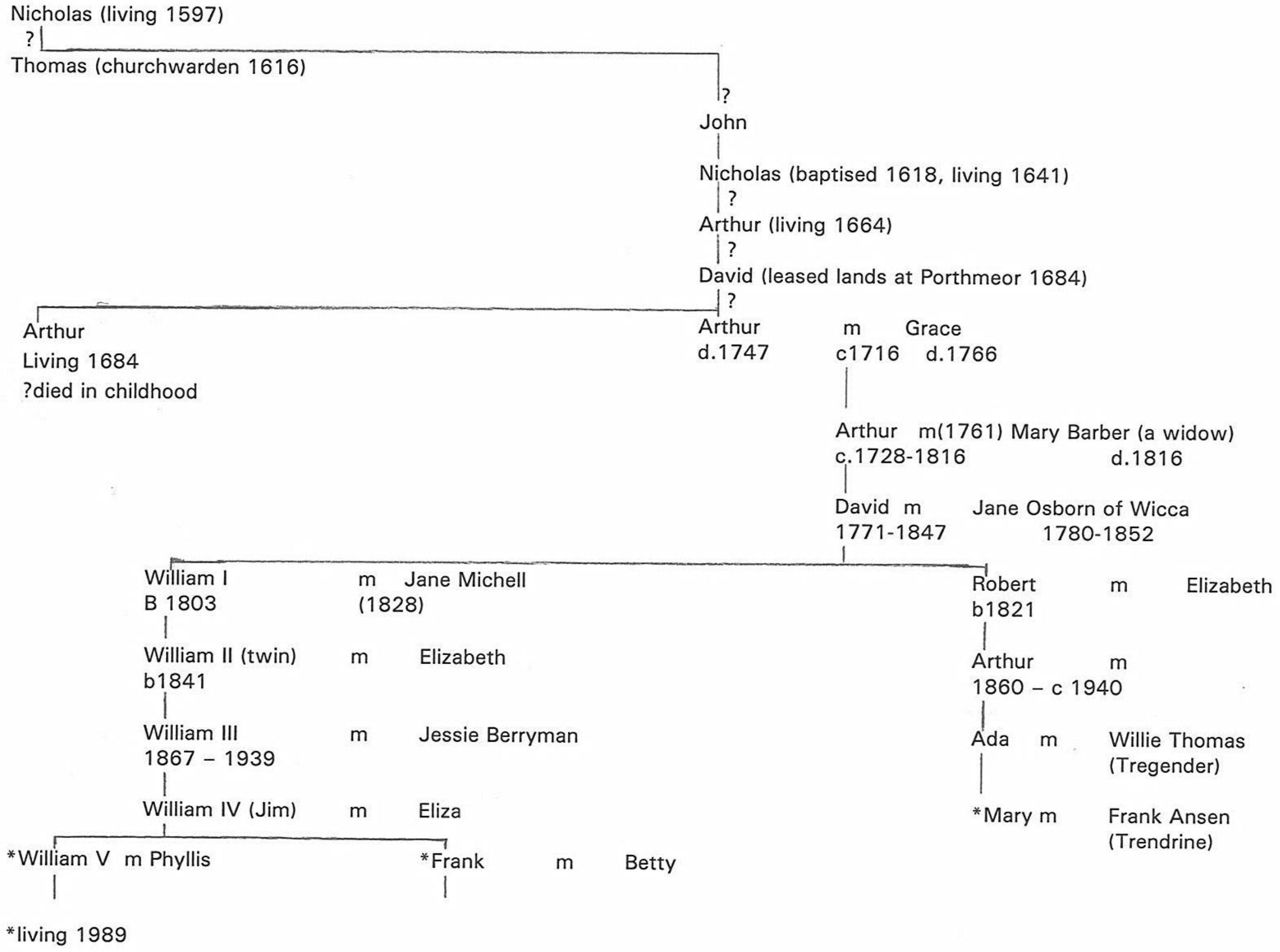
Porthmeor does not seem to have been part of the main Zennor manor of Trewey or Trethewy, held by the Killigrew family. In the early Middle Ages this part of Zennor parish belonged to the Manor of Binnerton, listed in the Domesday survey as being in Royal hands. In the 16th century this passed to the St Aubyn family, who were based at Clowance, (now demolished), further east towards Redruth. In a late 18th century rental of the manor, part of Porthmeor is still listed among its properties, but let in 1720 to the Earl of Radnor (of Lanhydrock), and in 1771 to his heir, George Hunt. The property held by the Earl is entered in the Lanhydrock Atlas of 1696.

Another part of Porthmeor was held from the manor of Treworlis in Breage (near Helston), which belonged to the Trelawney family, and it was from them that a lease was taken out by the Berryman family in 1684. The manor still owned part of the farm in the mid-18th century, and probably into the 19th. Another part again belonged to the Praed family, of Trevetha in Lelant.

The history of Porthmeor in the last two centuries, however, is very much that of the Berryman family, who still own and run the farm, and live at Higher Porthmeor. The date of 1682 carved on a lintel in the Upper House there is said to be the date at which they bought part of the farm, and as described above they acquired more on lease in 1684.

It is possible that they had already been there as tenants for 80 or 90 years before that. Subsidy Rolls (i.e. tax returns) of the 16th century list under Zennor a *Johes Porthmeor* (John) for 1509-23, and again (perhaps by now his son) in 1558. The value of his goods was then worth œ6, putting him among the wealthier farmers in a range of £1 - £10. In 1571 he is worth £8, but in 1593, his inheritance has been divided between two sons, *Willms Porthmere* and *Ricus Porthmere* (William and Richard), each worth £3.

Early Berrymans, with simplified table of descent of Porthmeor family to present day


Nicholas (living 1597)
?
Thomas (churchwarden 1616)
?
John
Nicholas (baptised 1618, living 1641)
?
Arthur (living 1664)
?
David (leased lands at Porthmeor 1684)
?
Arthur
Living 1684
?died in childhood
Arthur
d.1747
m
c1716
Grace
d.1766
Arthur
c.1728-1816
m(1761) Mary Barber (a widow)
d.1816
David
1771-1847
m
Jane Osborn of Wicca
1780-1852
William I
B 1803
m
(1828)
Jane Michell
William II (twin)
b1841
m
Elizabeth
William III
1867 – 1939
m
Jessie Berryman
William IV (Jim)
m
Eliza
*William V
m Phyllis
*Frank
m
Betty
Robert
b1821
m
Elizabeth
Arthur
1860 – c 1940
m
Ada
m
Willie Thomas
(Tregender)
*Mary m
Frank Ansen
(Trendrine)
*living 1989

It was still common at this time for a family to take the name of their dwelling place as their surname, and to change it if they moved. Alternatively they might take their father's name, and it would be from this stem that two widespread clans in the St Ives area, the Williams' and the Stephens', derived.

The Porthmere family may also, in fact, have been called Williams. The Subsidy Roll for 1557, instead of reading as it does in 1558:

Johes Porthmeor valet in bonis £6
Thoms Michell valet in bonis £5

reads:

Johes Willm valet in bonis £6
Thoms Mychell valet in bonis £5

The implication being that *Johes Porthmeor* and *Johes Willm* are one and the same. This might also explain the absence of anyone called Porthmeor from the otherwise very full Rolls of 1524 and 1545. There is at least one John Williams in each of these.

The Porthmeor family are strongly represented in the Muster Roll of 1569, which attempted to make a full list of all the fighting men in the country, and the weapons at their disposal. John Porthmeare is a parish constable for Zennor, with long bow, a sheaf of arrows (24), a short-brimmed helmet called a sallet, and a bill - a bill-hook blade mounted on a long shaft. William Porthmere has a bow and 12 arrows, an archer's leather and plated jacket, and a sallet. Another John Porthmere is both archer and billman, although he only has a bill, a jack (the leather and plated jacket) and a sallet.

In the Subsidy Roll of 1597, however, a new name appears: Nicus Beriman, assessed at œ3 in goods or posessions. His place in the list, and the value of his goods, are identical to those formerly entered for William Porthmeor, so it seems possible that he had taken on William's share of the Porthmeor farm. Richard Porthmeor is still listed, still assessed at £3, and his will was proved at Bodmin in 1601.

Another *Johes Porthmere* is listed in 1624/5, worth £3 and presumably Richard's son, but this is the last time that the name appears in the Subsidy Rolls, although five members of the family appear in the Protestation Return of 1642 (an oath of loyalty to the Protestant church, King and Parliament, that had to be signed by everyone over 18). Meanwhile in 1641 two members of the Berriman family (Arthur and Nicholas) are listed in the Subsidy Roll, and were therefore of taxable status, owners of property. Both appear on the Protestation Return as well, Nicholas as a churchwarden; and Arthur appears again in the Subsidy Roll of 1664.

Whether these Berrimans were actually living at Porthmeor, or somewhere else within the parish, we don't know. Jean Nankervis, who has researched the history of the Berrymans of Zennor, chasing 500 members of the family through parish registers and many other sources, has found two main branches in the late 17th century. One was at Porthmeor, and another in Churchtown, Zennor. Later the family dispersed among many other farms in the parish - among them Boswednack, Bosporthennis and Chykembro, all close to Porthmeor. But the likelihood is that apart from Zennor itself (where Thomas Berriman was Churchwarden in 1616, and Nicholas, son of John Bereman was baptised in 1618) the family settled to begin with at Porthmeor, and by the 1680s was already well established there.

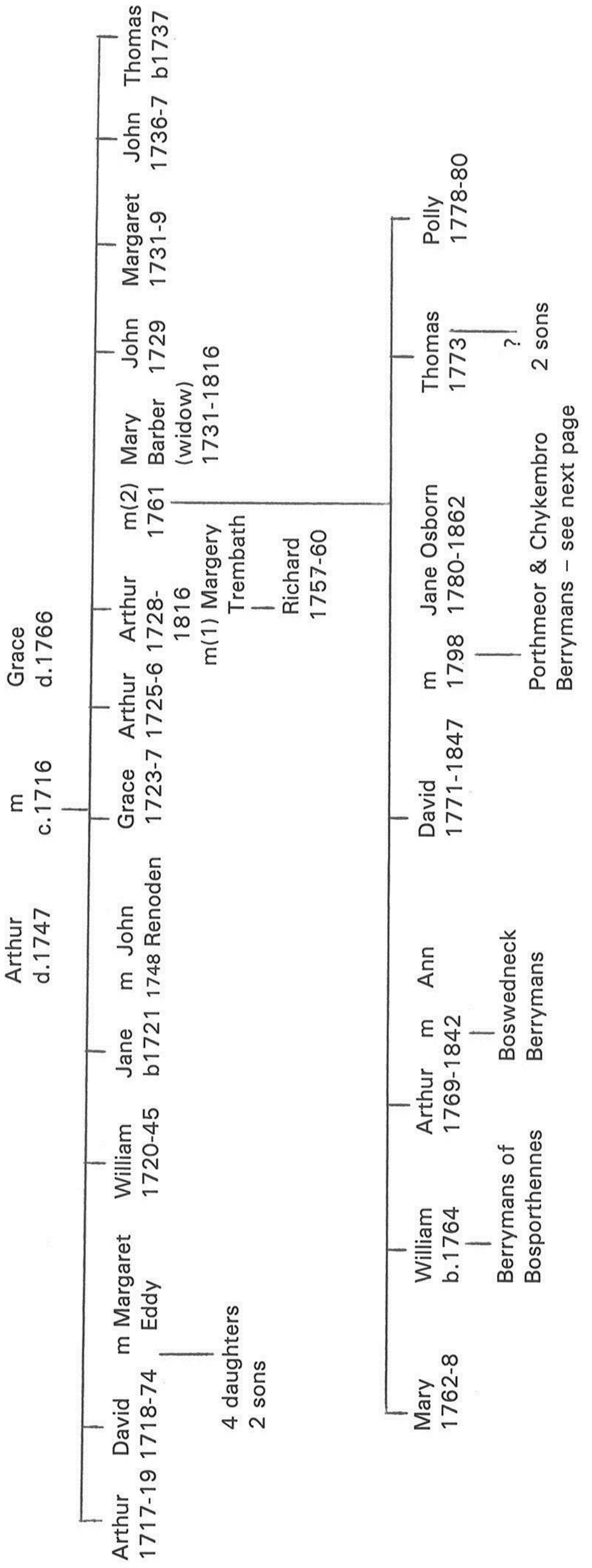
The lease from the Trelawneys in 1684, however, is the first positive link between family and property. For a consideration of œ60 Jonathan Trelawney of Coldrenick, St German's (a junior branch of the family) leased for 99 years or 3 lives ‘lands known as Porthmeor, in the parish of Zennor (part of the manor of

Treworles).' The lessee was David Berryman of Zennor, yeoman, and the 3 lives were those of himself, his wife Grace, and his son Arthur.

This Arthur may have been the one from whom the present Porthmeor Berrymans descend, whose wife was also called Grace. Their first child was baptized in 1717 however, which even if he was very young in 1684 (leases often were based on the lives of small children) would still put him starting a family well into his thirties, a late age when most people married in their mid-twenties. There may have been a generation in between, or indeed there may have been more than one family of Berrymans at Porthmeor, then as later. Alternatively the Arthur of 1684 may have died as a child, and a younger brother, born in about 1690, have been given the same name. This certainly happened in Arthur and Grace's own family: of eleven children baptized between 1717 and 1737, six at least died in early childhood, with two Arthurs before the third who lived to raise his own family.

This last Arthur took on the family property at Porthmeor; and was succeeded in turn by his son David. And it is with David that the Lower Porthmeor we see today begins to take shape, because he was almost certainly the builder of the new Farmhouse in which you are now staying. With him, too, we arrive in the 19th century, the age of detailed maps, and census returns, and the beginnings of family memory. We can begin to build up a much fuller picture of the place and of the life lived there.

Porthmeor Berrymans in the Eighteenth Century


Arthur d.1747
m c.1716
Grace d.1766
Arthur 1717-19
David 1718-74
m Margaret Eddy
4 daughters 2 sons
William 1720-45
Jane b1721
m 1748 John Renoden
Grace 1723-7
Arthur 1725-6
Arthur 1728-1816
m(1) Margery Trembath
Richard 1757-60
m(2) 1761
Mary Barber (widow) 1731-1816
John 1729
Margaret 1731-9
John 1736-7
Thomas b1737
Mary 1762-8
William b.1764
Berrymans of Bosporthennes
Arthur 1769-1842
m Ann
Boswedneck Berrymans
David 1771-1847
m 1798
Jane Osborn 1780-1862
Porthmeor & Chykembro Berrymans – see next page
Thomas 1773
?
2 sons
Polly 1778-80

Compiled from Mrs Nankerns's family tree

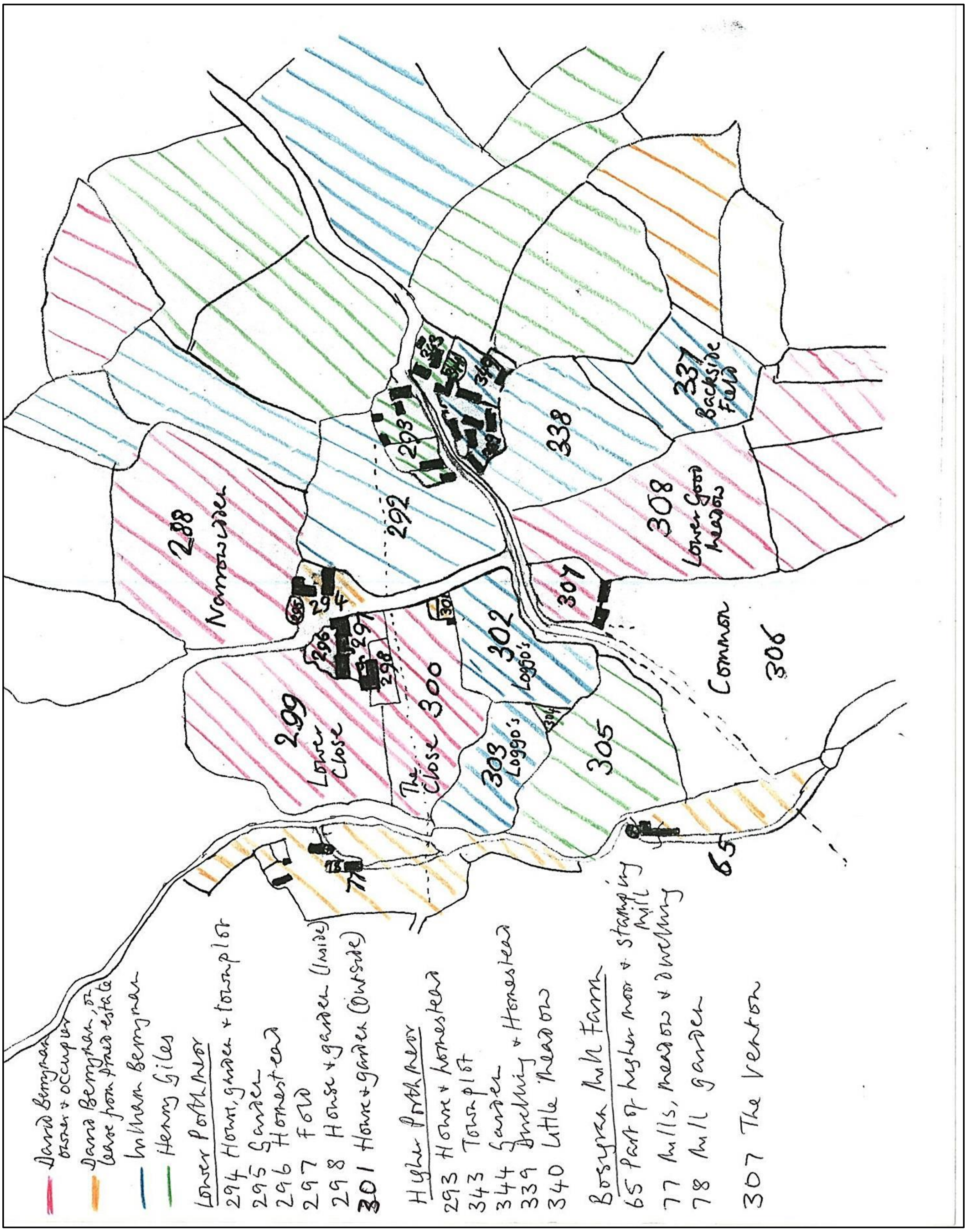
Porthmeor in 1840

The first 1′ Ordnance Survey map for Cornwall, surveyed in 1805, only shows larger buildings, but it still gives a clear impression of the Porthmeor hamlet (which it calls Polmear) at that date. Most of the buildings are on the Higher Porthmeor side of the lane, with a smaller settlement at Lower Porthmeor, consisting of one house below the track, and two small buildings above it. This pattern is confirmed on Greenwood's map of the same scale of 1827, and much clarified in the Tithe Map of 1842. This last is also the first time that we actually have names attached to buildings and land.

David Berryman's house stands out clearly, with its garden (slightly larger than now), and associated buildings. A plot for a further house and garden is marked on the site of the Outside House, although as already described there does not appear to be a house drawn on it. There is only a small building looking more like a pig-house, unless the first house here was much smaller than we imagine. A third house and garden, with its own ‘townplot’ or small yard, is shown above the track: Grace's house, still lived in. It may perhaps have been an unmarried daughter of David Berryman, called Grace, who was the last to live there, leaving it her name, as other's have done to similar humble buildings. There is a Tom's house at Higher Porthmeor for example.

Two further buildings are marked down the lane towards Bosigran, in a field called the Venton (meaning spring), the site of the present house called Arra Venton. The building nearest the lane was a Wesleyan chapel, and that next to it is said to have been a smithy. Certainly the 1841 census lists a blacksmith among the inhabitants of Lower Porthmeor.

All of these David Berryman owned, or held on lease, together with most of the fields running down to the stream, and north to the cliff. He also owned Bosporthennis, higher up the hill. At the time of the census in 1841 he was 70


David Berryman owner + occupier
David Berryman, on lease from Praed estate
William Berryman
Henry Giles
Lower Porthmeor
294 House, garden + townplot
295 Garden
296 Homestead
297 Fold
298 House + garden (Inside)
301 House + garden (Outside)
Higher Porthmeor
293 House + homestead
343 Townplot
344 Garden
339 Dwelling + Homestead
340 Little Meadow
Bosigran Mill Farm
65 Part of higher moor + stamping mill
77 Mills, meadow + dwelling
78 Mill garden
307 The Venton
288 Narrowmeadow
292
293
294
295
296
297
298
299 Lower Close
300 The Close
301
302 Loggo's
303 Loggo's
304
305
306 Common
307
308 Lower Good meadow
338
337 Backside Field
343
344
339
340
65
77
78

Porthmeor in 1842 from the Zennor Tithe Map, showing ownership of settlements and of fields around years old, but still had six children living with him at home, of whom the youngest was 15. The farm of Higher Porthmeor, however, he had already handed on to his son William, who was living in the Lower House there with his wife and five children, and one servant, a girl of 15.

David Berryman was thus a substantial farmer in Penwith terms, when the average holding was little more than 12 acres. The 1841 census does not give acreages, and by 1851 David had died, but the land then farmed by his sons at Porthmeor alone amounted to 57 acres.

There are two as yet unanswered questions concerning David Berryman. The first is whether it was he who established the distinct settlement of Lower Porthmeor. The lane is likely to have wound its way around the hamlet since the Middle Ages, but before 1800 it would have been no more than a track, and would have had no divisive effect. It may have been those two 16th- century heirs, Richard and William Porthmeor, who established the two settlements; the name Lower Porthmeor was perhaps already attached to Grace's House when David Berryman built his new house near it. Alternatively Grace's House may simply have been an outlying part of Higher Porthmeor, and the lower farm settlement have been a completely new departure.

The need for an additional farmhouse may have arisen from the sale in 1769 of the Upper House at Higher Porthmeor and about 30 acres to the Giles family, who farmed there throughout the 19th century, and continued to own the land until it was sold to the National Trust in 1986. David's father Arthur lived until 1816, presumably at Higher Porthmeor; and David married in 1798, so would have been wanting to establish his own household soon afterwards - he had three sons by 1803. This, as we have seen, is roughly the date of the Inside House, and probably of the earliest part of the Outside House, as well as the earlier farm buildings. The Inside House contains no traces of incorporating an earlier building (except possibly the wing at the back), so unless it stands on the site of one, it does seem likely that the whole complex of yards and gardens might be contemporary with it. They are laid out on a much more generous scale than the earlier farms, which would indicate a later date.

In this light, it is interesting to look at the names used in the 19th century census returns. The 1841 census, dating from David's lifetime, is the only one to call them Lower and Upper Porthmeor. In 1851 Lower Porthmeor is simply Porthmeor, while Higher Porthmeor is rather eccentrically called Little Porthmeor. Thereafter, until 1881 (the last census available) it is always just Porthmeor, with both hamlets returned as one. It is not inconceivable that a distinction that was important to an older generation, who had created it, was no longer remembered in their shared Berryman ownership, though admittedly today they are still referred to, briefly, as Lower 'meor and Higher 'meor.

The other question concerning David Berryman is of course how he could afford to build such a grand house, with its two full storeys, its fine ashlar front, and its quite grand decoration. As has already been remarked, the gulf between this and Grace's House, or whatever 18th-century predecessors there were at Higher Porthmeor, is enormous. Even a farmer on the scale of David Berryman would be hard put to raise the cash for this improvement from his agricultural returns alone.

The answer must lie in the valley below Porthmeor, a hint of which is given in the Tithe Map of 1842. This shows that in addition to Porthmeor and Bosporthennis David Berryman held a lease on Mill Farm, Bosigran, on the other side of the Porthmeor stream. This is let to a member of the Eddy family of Bosigran, but just upstream from the mill itself (which had existed from the 17th century at least, and possibly before) there is marked a Stamping Mill.

Such works, where the ore extracted from tin mines was crushed and washed, are found on many streams in Cornwall. Usually they were attached, formally or informally, to a particular mine. The Bosigran Stamps would probably have worked ore from the Carn Galver Mine, or the Zennor and Morvah Tin Mines as they were then called, but possibly other mines as well. The date of these first stamps is unknown, but the Cornwall Archaeological Unit in their Bosigran Survey for the National Trust suggest that the remains date from the 1810s, although they do not rule out their reuse from an earlier period. The Carn Galver Mine was flourishing by 1834, although for how long it had been working is not known; but other mines existed near Rosemergy during the 18th century, with stamps on the Porthmoina stream, and the Bosigran Stamps could have been connected with similar workings.

The main period of mining activity began in around 1780. Prosperity of a kind hitherto unknown in Cornwall was suddenly there in its midst. The population expanded, and anyone who could had a share in the industry. Whether the Berryman family had a connection with the stamps apart from leasing the land on which they stood, or whether they were involved in any other mining enterprise, is not known, but it is highly likely. There was a considerable overlap between mining and agriculture, in Cornwall as in Wales, with the one supporting the other through bad times - Gilbert's *Parochial History of Cornwall* (1838), mentions the presence of tin lodes in Zennor ‘tending to the great profit of the farmers and tinners’ of the parish. Berryman family tradition certainly maintains a link with the later, much larger stamps in the valley, built on the site of the old grist mill in 1861 and worked as late as 1922. A window looking down the hill from the Outside House is said to have been inserted to allow a watch to be kept on it. It must have been from some such source as this that the money for the new farmhouse came.

Porthmeor also provided homes for miners. In 1841 two householders at Higher Porthmeor are recorded as Tin miners. Another, John Newton, is entered as a blind man, and it may have been he who was injured in an accident at the Carn Galver mine in 1840, shortly before it closed. The Penzance Gazetter recorded that ‘a poor man’ of this name was injured when a charge exploded in his face ‘and melancholy to relate, blew both eyes out, and otherwise injured him.’ However the word ‘blindman’ has afterwards been crossed out, and it may be that this John Newton was confused with another, the husband of Jane, a daughter of David Berryman.

Jane (entered as a Dairywoman) and two daughters are listed in 1841, but her husband, to whom she was married in 1834, is not, and it may be that he had died of his wounds. Certainly by 1851 Jane had remarried, to Josiah Dalley, a tin preparer; while a son by her first marriage, William Newton, aged 19, is now a tin miner as well.

The later Nineteenth century–more Berryman’s

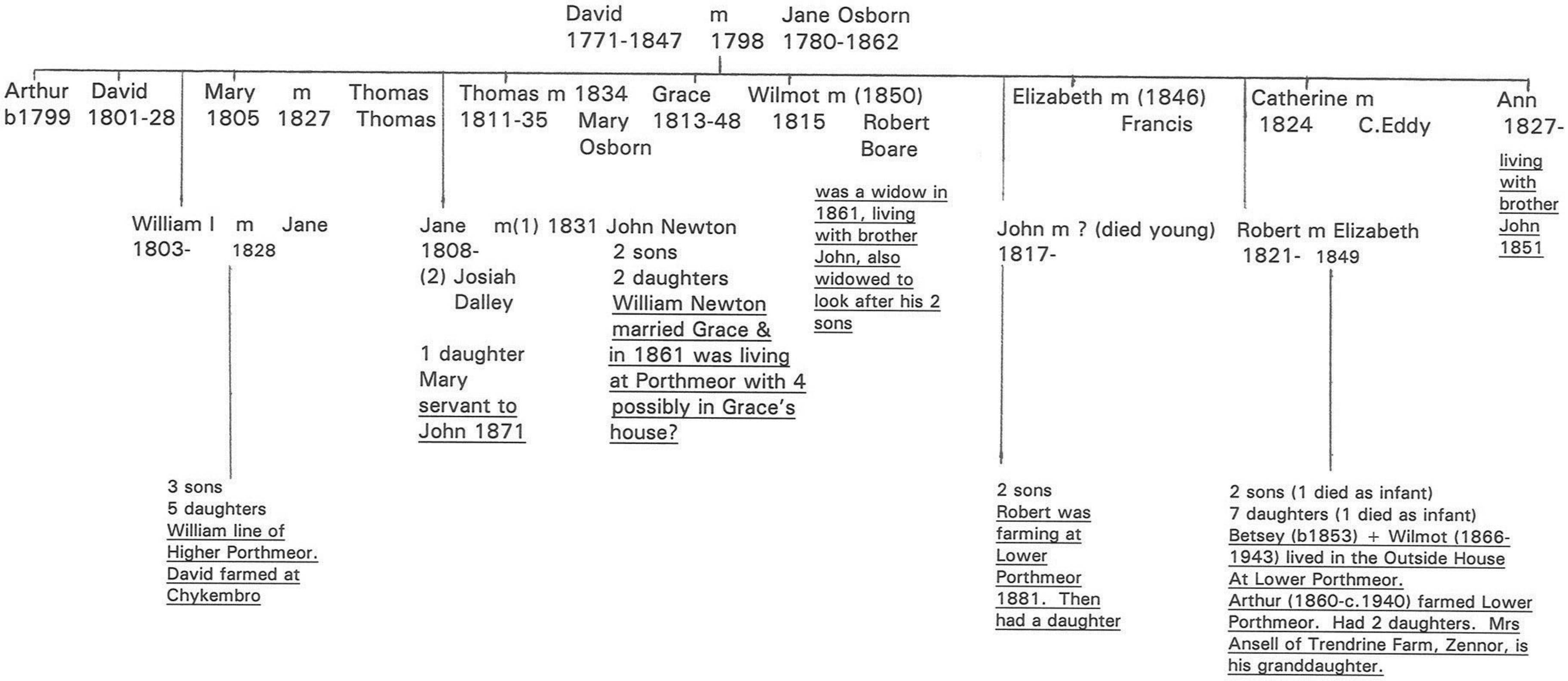
The five sets of 19th century census returns soon become compulsive reading, as we see families grow up and change, and new generations take over. It is difficult to disentangle the different dwellings, since the lists are not consistent with each other, but the main households stand out clearly.

In 1841 there are three households in Lower Porthmeor: that of David Berryman himself, with his wife and six children; that of Jane Newton, (née Berryman) and two daughters, possibly living in Grace's House; and that of William Richards the Blacksmith, with his wife and two small sons. If he lived at Venton, this would confirm the suggestion that the Outside House was being built at this date.

At Higher Porthmeor there are five households: that of William Berryman; that of Joseph Giles, farmer (aged 25, unmarried, with a housekeeper); that of Thomas Hoskins, Tin miner (a wife and three sons); and Richard Grenfell, Tin Miner, who from the names of his family was clearly an active Chapel Man - his wife is Charity, while two daughters are called Charity and Mercy; and lastly that of John Newton, with a wife and one child. The total population of the hamlet is 40.

Ten years later things have changed slightly. David Berryman has died, and in his place at Lower Porthmeor is his son Robert, just married with a wife and one child, and a boy of 16 as servant. He was almost certainly living in the Outside House, and is farming 15 acres. His mother, and his brother John (also farming 15 acres) and three of his sisters are living in the Inside House. Jane and her new husband Josiah Dalley are still there, perhaps still in Grace's House; and William Richards is also still there, now with five sons.

Porthmeor Berrymans in the 19th century


David m Jane Osborn
1771-1847 1798 1780-1862
Arthur b1799
David 1801-28
Mary m Thomas Thomas
1805 1827
Thomas m 1834 Mary Osborn
1811-35
Grace 1813-48
Wilmot m (1850) Robert Boare
1815
Elizabeth m (1846) Francis
Catherine m C.Eddy
1824
Ann 1827-
living with brother John 1851
William I m Jane
1803- 1828
3 sons
5 daughters
William line of Higher Porthmeor.
David farmed at Chykembro
Jane m(1) 1831 John Newton
1808-
(2) Josiah Dalley
1 daughter Mary servant to John 1871
2 sons
2 daughters
William Newton married Grace & in 1861 was living at Porthmeor with 4 possibly in Grace's house?
was a widow in 1861, living with brother John, also widowed to look after his 2 sons
John m ? (died young)
1817-
2 sons
Robert was farming at Lower Porthmeor 1881. Then had a daughter
Robert m Elizabeth
1821- 1849
2 sons (1 died as infant)
7 daughters (1 died as infant)
Betsey (b1853) + Wilmot (1866-1943) lived in the Outside House At Lower Porthmeor.
Arthur (1860-c.1940) farmed Lower Porthmeor. Had 2 daughters. Mrs Ansell of Trendrine Farm, Zennor, is his granddaughter.

Compiled from Mrs Nankerris's family tree & Census returns

At Higher Porthmeor the number of households has decreased, although one new house is recorded as being built - presumably by William Berryman (farming 27 acres), who now has eight children to house, as well as his mother-in-law. Joseph Giles has gone, to be replaced by Henry Giles, a man of 51 with a grown-up family (a daughter and two sons), who has moved here from Morvah, and has one maidservant living in. Thomas Hoskins is still there, but has become an agricultural labourer, no doubt because Carn Galver Mine closed down for eleven years. Two of his sons have become tin miners, however, while a third is a cordwainer. The Grenfells and the John Newtons have gone.

In 1861 the hamlet is returned as one, with no distinction between its two parts. However the Giles family, the William Berrymans, the Robert and John Berrymans are all still there. John Berryman is married and widowed, with his sister Wilmot living with him to care for his two children. After his household, one unoccupied house is entered, probably Grace's House. Robert Berryman's wife Elizabeth has just given birth to Arthur, who according to family tradition was born in the lower half of the Outside House, while the upper half was being enlarged. There has been trouble in the William Berryman household, with the birth of an illegitimate child to Mary, the eldest daughter, the father being one of the Giles family.

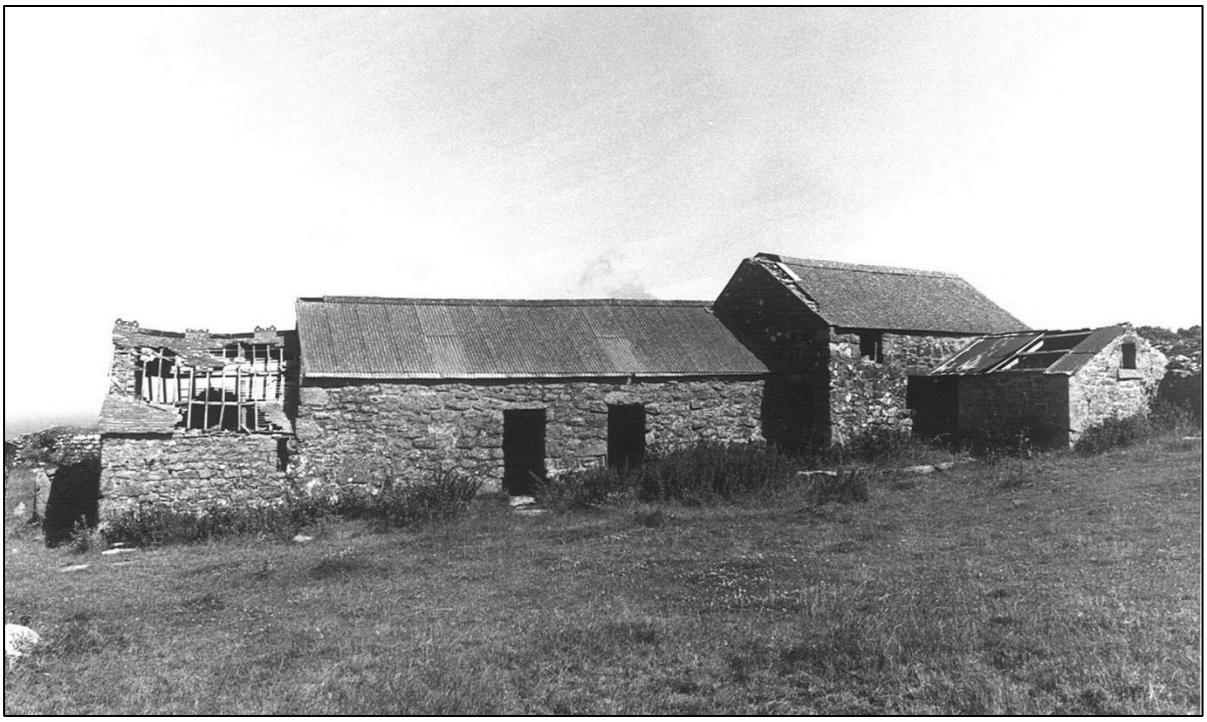
There are two interesting points about this census: for the first time some of the children are recorded as Scholars; and the acreages of farmland have all slightly increased. Since it is unlikely that all four farms would have purchased more land, this must be because formerly rough land was now being enclosed or brought under cultivation.

The 1871 and 1881 returns shows the results of the end of the tin boom, and the beginning of the depression which led to a great fall in population. In 1871 there are still five households in the hamlet as a whole, four of which are Berrymans - William has handed on most of his farm to his son William II, now married with two sons. Ten years later the number has shrunk to four with the death of the older William. Robert Berryman's is now the largest family, with five children living at home. Elizabeth, the older daughter, is a schoolmistress; Arthur is helping on the farm; and two of the younger children are draper's apprentices. They are living in the enlarged Outside House, with the lower part listed as uninhabited. John's son, another Robert, has taken on his father's farm, and is presumably living in the Inside House - and it may indeed have been he rather than his uncle Robert who built the new barn and cow-house. The number of inhabitants has shrunk to 24.

Farming the land

Whatever the tin mines may have contributed to the prosperity of the 19th century, the basis of the Berrymans' lives remained the land. The way in which this was farmed has largely been governed by the pattern of tiny fields, which was already well established by the Roman period. With small accommodations to later practices, such as the occasional medieval ‘strip-field’, and more recently the removal of walls to create larger fields, these are basically the same today. The crops within them may have changed in small ways, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, but the methods of cultivation were still recognisably the same even after the Second World War. Wooden ploughs were used until the mid-19th century; the first tractor only arrived at Porthmeor in 1954. Since then, however, the old ways, and most of the old tools, have gone, and in another generation will be forgotten. Colonel Hirst in the 1930s recorded and collected many of them, and a visit to his Wayside Museum in Zennor is essential. William Berryman has also been very kind in telling us his memories of the farm.

The 1842 Tithe Map gives a detailed record of the names and uses of individual fields at that time, and of the different divisions of the farming hamlets. A study of the buildings helps to fill in the picture. So, from the presence everywhere of cow-houses, and of barn/granaries, we can see that the agriculture was a mixed one. The Tithe Map gives the impression that few fields were pasture for grazing, however; most are arable, with one or two meadows, for hay, and some rough fields or crofts for ‘furze’ (gorse), which was harvested for fuel. The Bosigran Survey, though, warns of accepting this too much at face value. The Tithe Assessors were keen to enter as many fields as possible as arable, since their value was greater. Many of the fields listed as such were only very occasionally cultivated; others were regularly put down to crops, but on a rotation system, under which 5 - 10 years of ‘ley’ or sown grass would follow on 2 - 3 years of cultivation. These ley fields would meanwhile have been grazed.



Cow houses and fold-yard, 1987

Matthews certainly records in 1892 that most farms were pastoral, not agricultural. In addition to ley fields, the cattle would have grazed on areas of rough common, and in summer on marginal areas of moor and cliff. In winter they might graze on the stubble of the arable fields. For some of the winter the cattle would be brought into the farm - William Berryman says that although it was possible to keep them out all winter, they never thrived on it. At Lower Porthmeor they would have lived in the long cow-house, and later in the Four-house and the ground floor of the Barn; and in the yard between the Outside and Inside Houses which in 1842 is marked as the Fold.

In the late 19th century there was a herd of about 30 cows between the three Berryman farms. Most of these were bullocks. In this century the balance has tipped more towards dairy farming, first of all with a herd of Guernseys, then White Shorthorns, and finally in the last twenty years, Friesians. The herd now is about 100 cows and 70-80 bullocks.

A variety of crops was grown in what Matthews describes as ‘the rich level land between the Zennor hills and the sea.’ A form of oat called pillas was the main grain crop from medieval times until the early 20th century. Gilbert in 1838 says both corn and barley were grown in the ‘very many fertile plots of ground’ among the ‘stones and rocks of great bigness’ with which the parish was ‘comparitively scattered all over.’ Earlier there were pulses such as peas and beans, and vetches. Later turnips and potatoes were introduced, but did not flourish. In this century vegetable crops became more common, such as broccoli, but more in lower parishes such as Lelant, where there were also orchards.

The threshing (locally thrashing) of the grain was an important occasion. Until the mid-19th century, this would have been done by hand, on a threshing floor. Possibly the flat area supported by an embankment at the top of the field below Lower Porthmeor, (called the Close, while the spring in it is known as the dicky) was once used for this purpose. Then came the age of the threshing machine. The first one, pulled by a traction engine, came from Lelant, and visited the farms in turn. At Porthmeor the threshing was always done at Lower Porthmeor, in the main yard beyond the farm buildings, called the Homestead, or in the Close field. The straw was then gathered into ricks, which stood on the platform at the top of the field.

Hay was another important crop. This might be stacked in the Homestead, or in one of the meadows where it was cut. After cutting and drying it was first gathered (or ‘saved’) into stooks. Then on the following Saturday morning (never any other day whatever the weather) it was collected and built into ricks. It was important that the hay was not too green, or it might overheat and catch fire. William Berryman tells a story of how on one occasion when his father was still alive, but housebound, a painter was sketching (something the farmers in this area have become very used to) one of the men building the rick. When it was finished he took it in to show to the old man, who looked at it and said ‘If the rick is that colour it's going to catch fire.’ Sure enough, soon afterwards, the man came running for a bucket of water, reporting that smoke was coming from the centre of the rick. After the War the Berrymans had a stationary baler, and ricks became a thing of the past.

Every household had its pigs, and pig-houses are always to be found among the farm buildings. There are two at Lower Porthmeor, one below the Barn, and one on the other side of the Homestead. Both open onto the field, to allow the pigs to graze. The further one has its own swill kitchen, where the feed was prepared. The Tithe Map shows that each house also had a garden - in the case of Grace's House on a tiny scale. Here a few vegetables could be grown. The older houses also have a ‘townplace’ or ‘townplot’, a small yard off which such buildings as the bakehouse or the dairy would open. There were several of these at Bosigran, but at Porthmeor they only occur with Grace's House and the Upper House at Higher Porthmeor.

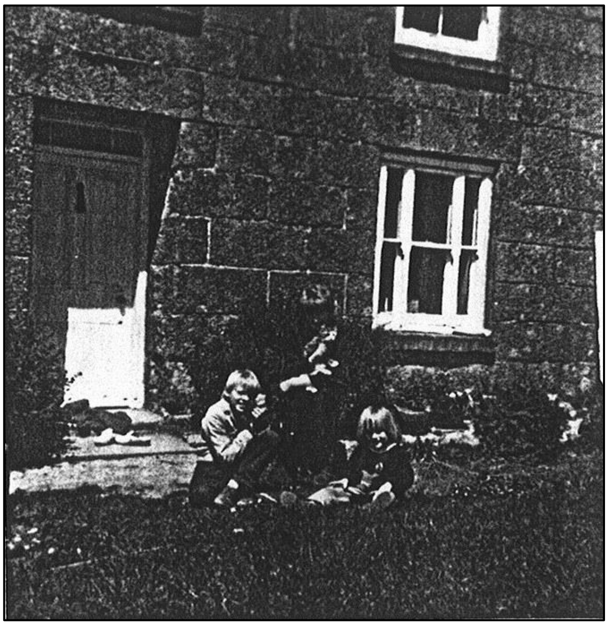
Another animal that would be found on most farms, by 1900 at least, would be the horse. In earlier centuries the ploughs would have been pulled by draught oxen, but during the 19th century horses became more common. They were certainly a common sight at Porthmeor between the Wars, when William Berryman's father dealt in them. Sheep, however, were not a success, since they ate grass needed for the cattle in spring.

A final crop for all these coastal farms would have been fish. Most coves used to have a boat or two pulled up on the shore until not so very long ago; and many a farmer would have had a share in a seine net, for catching pilchard.

Up to the present day

At the beginning of this century the main farms at Porthmeor had shrunk to two. The Giles moved to Hertfordshire, and their land was rented by the Berrymans. Higher Porthmeor belonged to William III (and has since been handed down through at least two more). At Lower Porthmeor there was only Arthur. He lived in the main Farmhouse, or Inside House, and his sisters Betsy (the schoolteacher) and Wilmot lived in the Outside House. They used to have bed and breakfast visitors there in the '30s, with an old tin tray for a sign, which was covered with some old flannel drawers when there was no room. Both Wilmot and Captain Arthur died during the Second World War.

Lower Porthmeor was inherited by Arthur's two daughters, but in effect the Higher Porthmeor Berrymans took it on as well. A farm which had been worked by the men of three families was eventually being run by two.

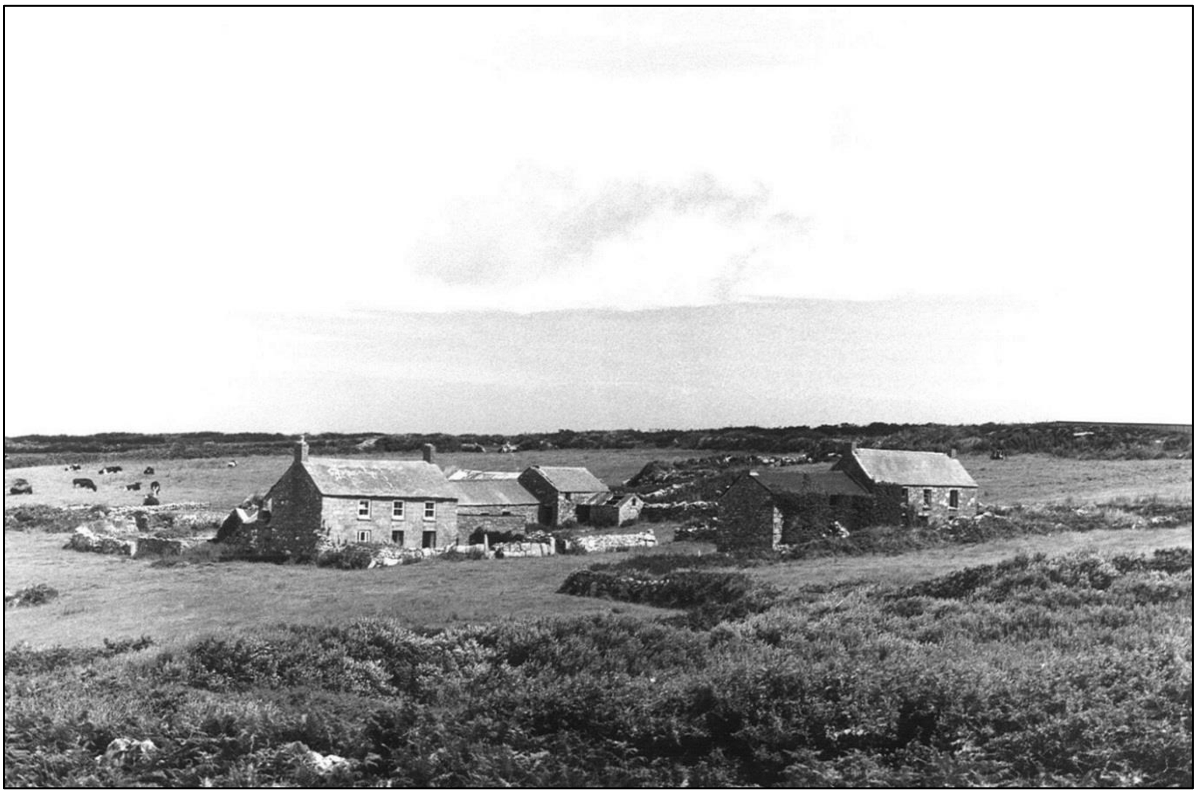


Berryman children outside the Inside House
in the 1960s.

William had moved up to near Liskeard in the 1950s, but he returned in 1964, and went to live in the Inside House at Lower Porthmeor. Although horses had by then been replaced by tractors for ploughing, William kept up the tradition, and was for many years Champion Ploughman for the West of England, and once All England Champion. The Outside House was let to the Keating family.

Both houses fell empty at about the same time in the mid 1970s, the William Berrymans moving over the road to Higher Porthmeor. The same was happening all along the coast - the population of Zennor had fallen from just over a thousand in 1841, to 200 after the War. Roofs could be seen falling in all along the coast, and inevitably in their struggle to keep going farmers were increasingly deciding to take down the ancient walls to create larger, more economic fields - the Iron Age field pattern around Chysauster has gone, for example. The National Trust decided that the area should be made a priority, and in 1985 launched an appeal to buy land there under Enterprise Neptune. It was particularly keen to acquire this in the northern parishes where, as always, change has come more slowly than elsewhere, and there was still time to preserve both archaeology and landscape. The hope to preserve the farming practices upon which both of these depend was strengthened by the designation by the Government in 1987 of a large area of Penwith as an Environmentally Sensitive Area, where farmers are given an annual payment to support the continuation of traditional farming practices. This still left many groups of redundant buildings at threat from decay or insensitive development, and the Trust has since attempted to have part of the coastal strip designated as a Rural Conservation Area. It has also sought to acquire, and restore in a traditional way, buildings as well as land.

So far Bosigran has been the Trust's largest acquisition in the parish of Zennor, together with most of Rosemergy, long stretches of cliff land, and covenants over much else. At Higher Porthmeor in 1986 it bought the old Giles farm, the Upper House with 70 acres; and then in 1987, with help from Landmark, the



hamlet of Lower Porthmeor with 6 acres of land. The buildings were leased to Landmark, which has now restored both houses. The Outside House, once rented back to the National Trust as a home for the Coastal Warden, has been a Landmark since 1995 and is now known as the Captain's House.

Shortly after we had taken on Lower Porthmeor, the house called Arra Venton came up for sale, and since in its form and colour it had become an eyesore, we bought it, in order to subdue it and bring it back into harmony with its neighbours.

Restoration of the buildings

When Landmark took on Lower Porthmeor, both houses were derelict, and the farm buildings were also in a poor state, after severe gales a few years before. Slate roofs had been replaced with corrugated iron or tin, sections of which had blown off. Squatters had been living in the Inside House, decorating its walls with mystical drawings.

Work began with the roofs. These had traditional Cornish scantle slates - small slates in courses of diminishing size set in a bed of lime mortar; and they have been renewed in the same manner, with slates from the Delabole quarry, near Camelford in North Cornwall. The roof structure of the Inside House had to be completely renewed too.

The walls of the Inside House needed some repair, especially in the north-west wing, where the core was very loose, and the brick chimney also needed rebuilding. Otherwise all that was wanted was complete repointing, all done with lime mortar. Time will reveal how effective this is at keeping the building dry - one of the properties of lime is that it draws the moisture out of the wall and allows it to evaporate, rather than trapping it as concrete does. Houses pointed entirely with lime, before the cement age began in the mid-19th century, were thus probably much drier than we imagine.

The upstairs windows, and those on the staircase and in the kitchen were repaired, but that in the sitting room had vanished, so a new one had to be made (these were all late 19th century replacements of the original ones). The front door frame was repaired, but the door itself is new. The back door into the yard had been blocked up, but the frame was still there. Another door led from the kitchen into the dairy/ bakehouse; in order to make room for cupboards, we decided to block this one, and unblock the other. The back door itself is new, as are the windows in the dairy, storeroom above, and shed. Except in the dairy, these copy what was there before.

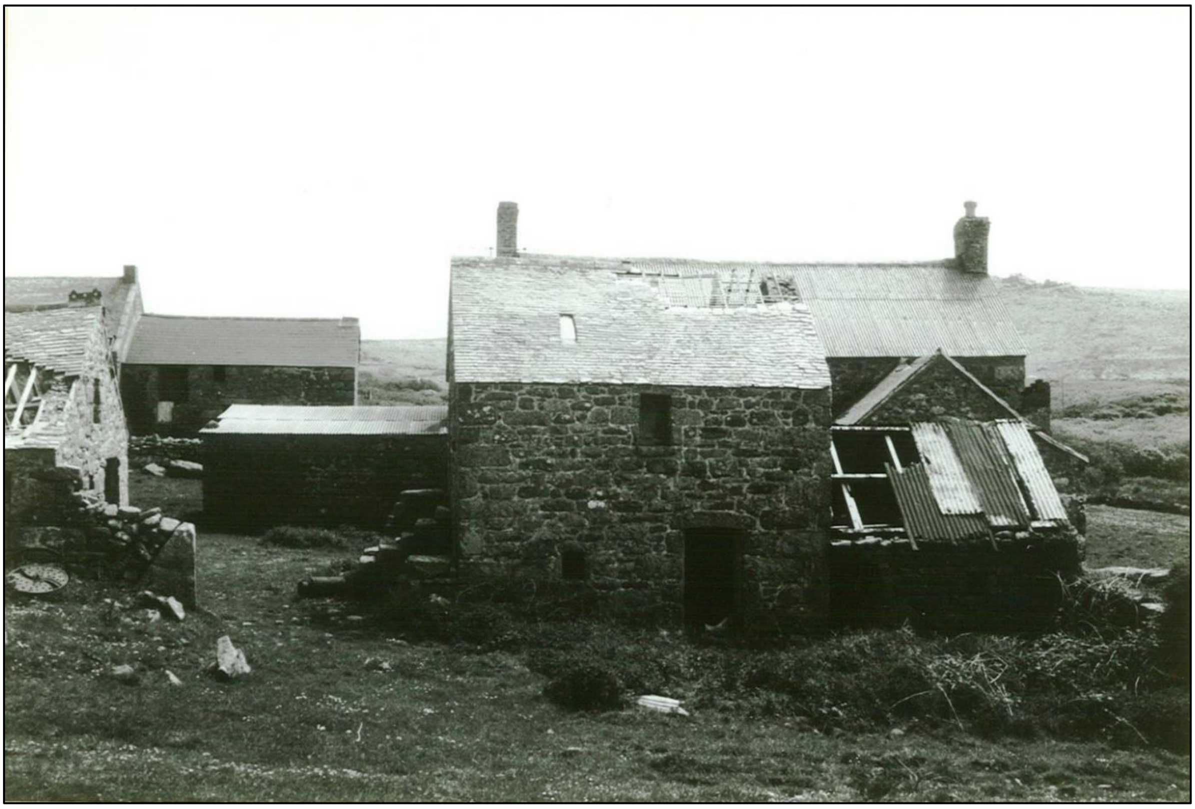
The ceiling joists in the kitchen were repaired, and their ends strengthened. The floorboards throughout the house are mostly new, although whenever possible the old ones were retained. The granite floor in the hall is original, but that in the kitchen is new, replacing concrete.

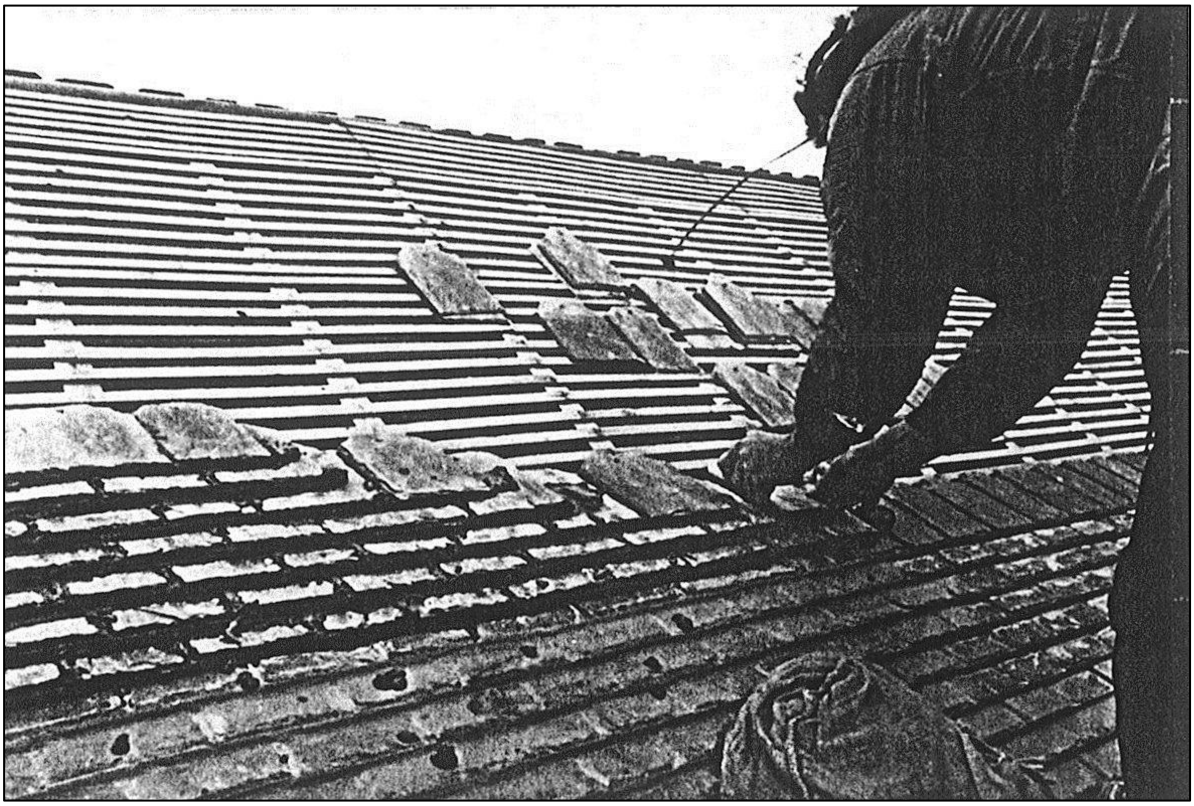
The great granite fireplace in the kitchen has been slightly tamed with a new wooden surround. The sitting room fireplace is entirely new, replacing a modern stone one. The stairs were repaired, but new balusters had to be made, the old ones having been burned for firewood by squatters.

When we first took on Porthmeor, the bedroom upstairs still had its pretty fireplace, but this later disappeared. An exact copy was made from photographs. The room never had a cornice, but it had the little dado rail, which has been renewed. The bathroom partition is as it was when we came - this room was formerly a bedroom.

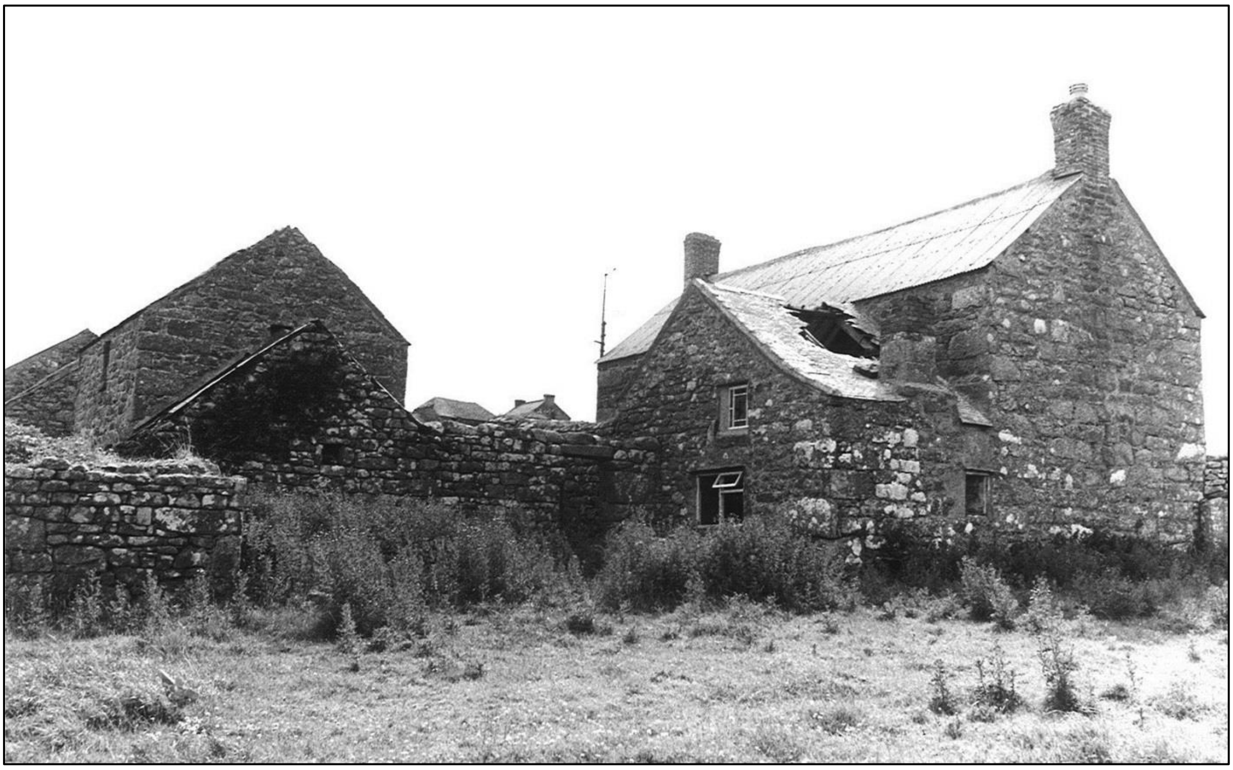
The repair of the Outside House has had to be equally thorough, and since the masonry of the walls was of a less high quality, quite a lot of grouting and filling has had to be done, as well as repointing. It was decided to leave the lower end as the half-house, half-stable that it had become, with new windows to make the front more presentable, but the interior left as a shell. The projecting fireplace here is very good.

The barn has been given a new roof and doors, but otherwise we have just made the farm buildings sound and left them be. We did remove a crumbling carthouse (and the machinery that had solidified inside it) from the end of the Inside House, however. Grace's House and the building next to it are not part of our property, and still belong to the Berrymans.



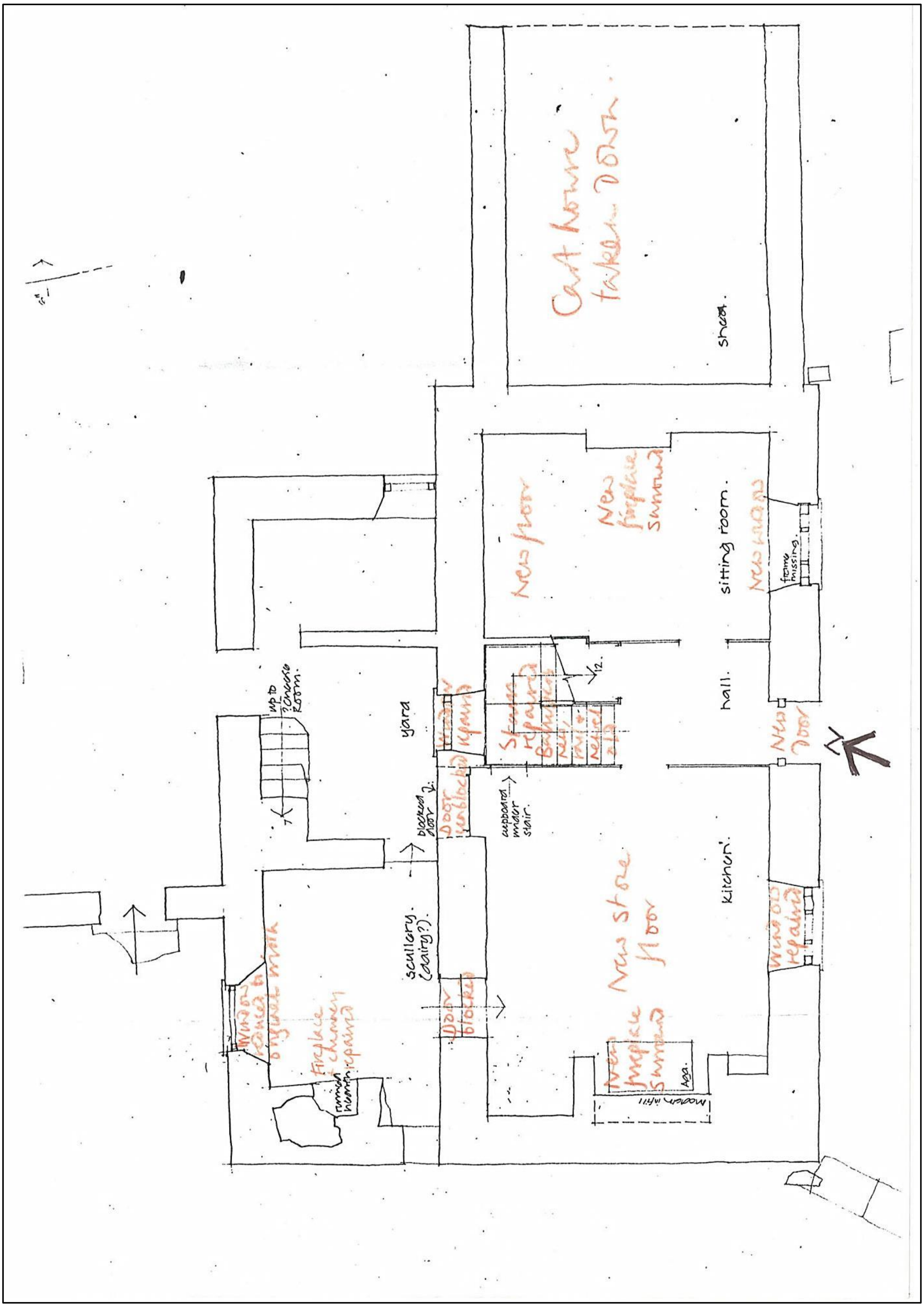


Scantle slate roofing – small slates set in lime mortar

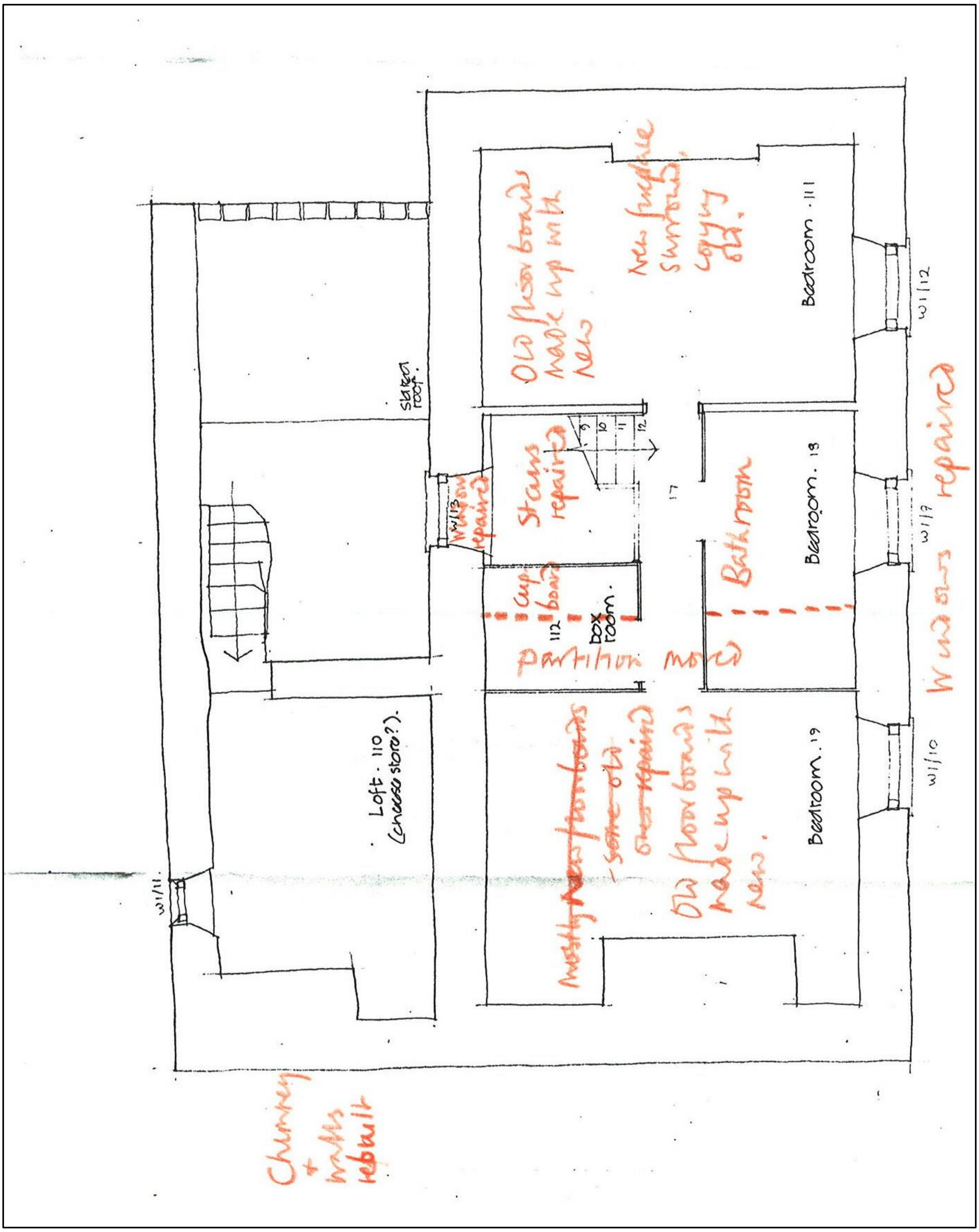


The dairy (or bakehouse?) needed some rebuilding. The ground floor window had been enlarged, with a modern frame; but has now been made smaller again

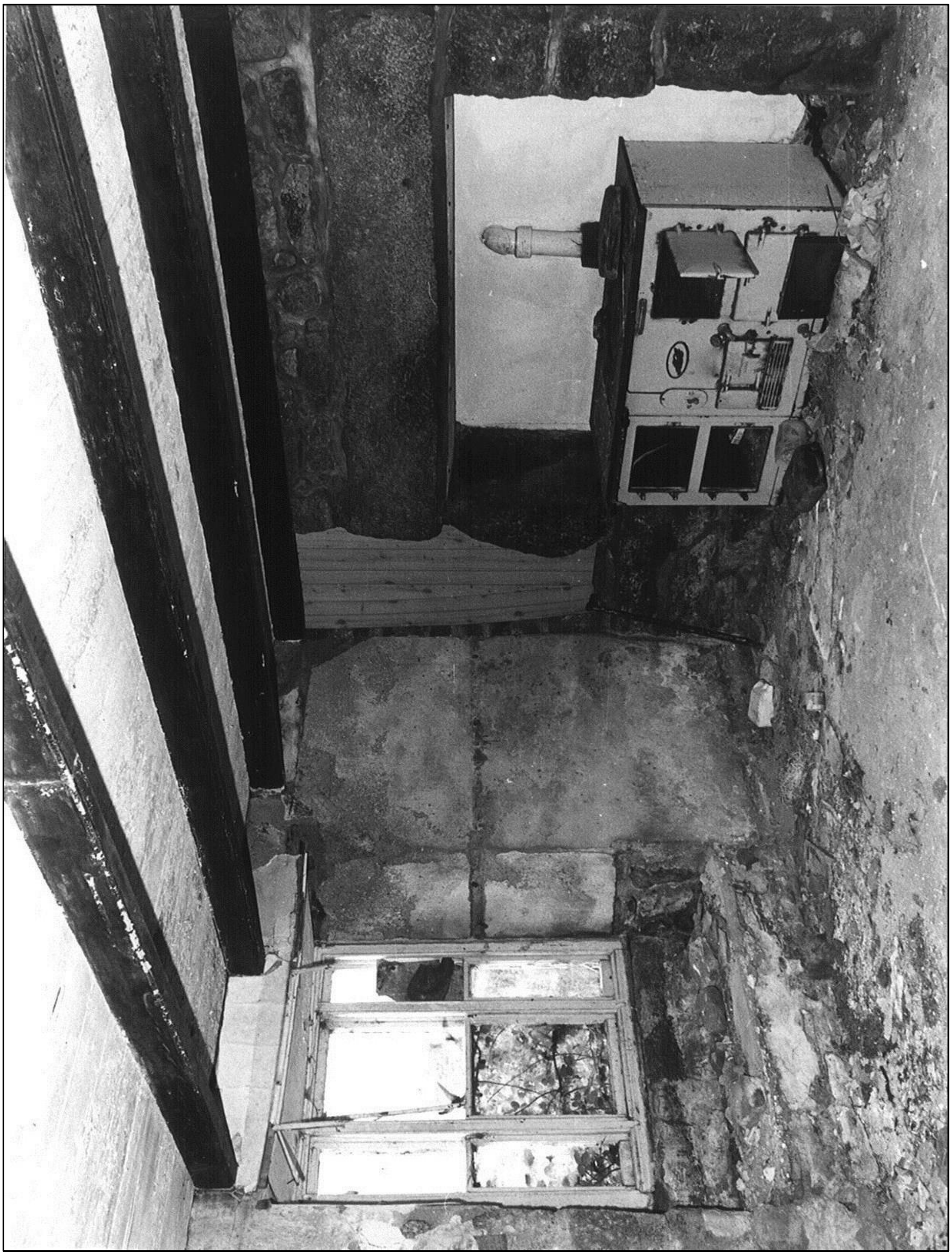
The walls and enclosures that divide the settlement and give some shelter from the terrific winds, are as important as the buildings themselves, and give the farm much of its character as an extension of the geological landscape. Some of them have been repaired already, and others will be in due course. Where buildings have become derelict, such as the pig-house, no attempt will be made to reverse this, although the effects of time will not be given free reign in future. This extraordinary and beautiful place is still part of the service-able architecture of Penwith, and must not be encouraged to become a new layer in its archaeology, like the mine engine houses. With the help of the Berrymans, and the National Trust, it looks unlikely that it will.


Cart house taken down.
shed.
New floor
New fireplace surround
sitting room.
New windows
frame missing.
hall.
12
New Door
Stairs repaired Banisters new rail + newel ?
yard
Window repaired
up to ?cheese Room.
Door (unblocked)
blocked door ?.
cupboard under stair.
kitchen.
New stone floor
Window old repaired
Door blocked
scullery. (dairy?)
Window replaced to original width
fireplace chimney repaired
furnace hearth
New fireplace surround
Aga.
modern infill

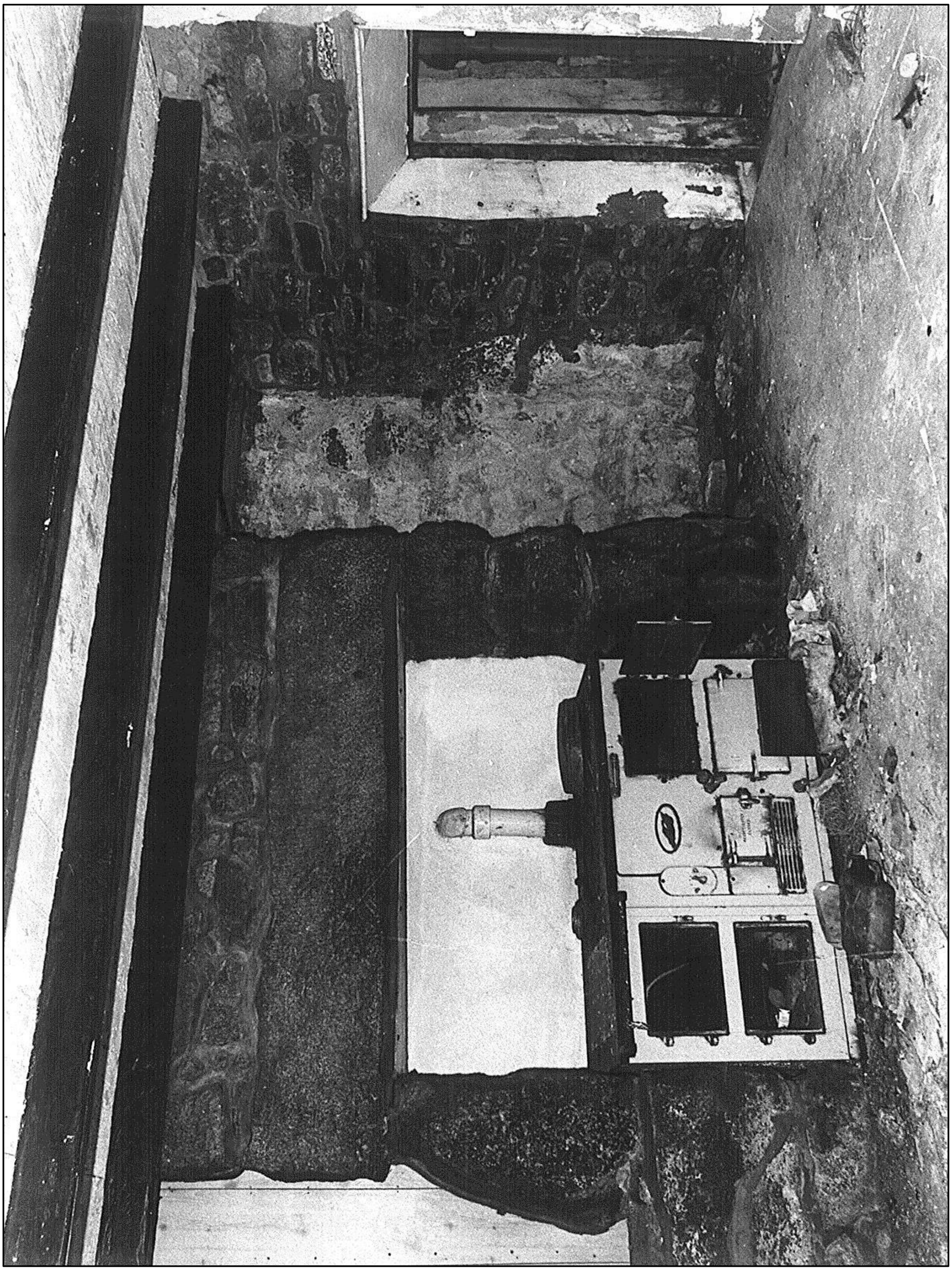
Ground floor


Chimney + walls rebuilt
W1/11
Loft . 110 (cheese store?).
slated roof.
W1/13 window repaired
Stairs repaired
9
10
11
12
17
cup-board
112
box room.
partition moved
Old floor boards made up with new
New fireplace surrounds, copying old.
~~mostly new floorboards~~
~~- some old~~
~~ones repaired~~
Old floor boards made up with new.
Bedroom . 111
Bathroom
Bedroom . 18
Bedroom . 19
W1/12
W1/7
W1/10
Windows repaired

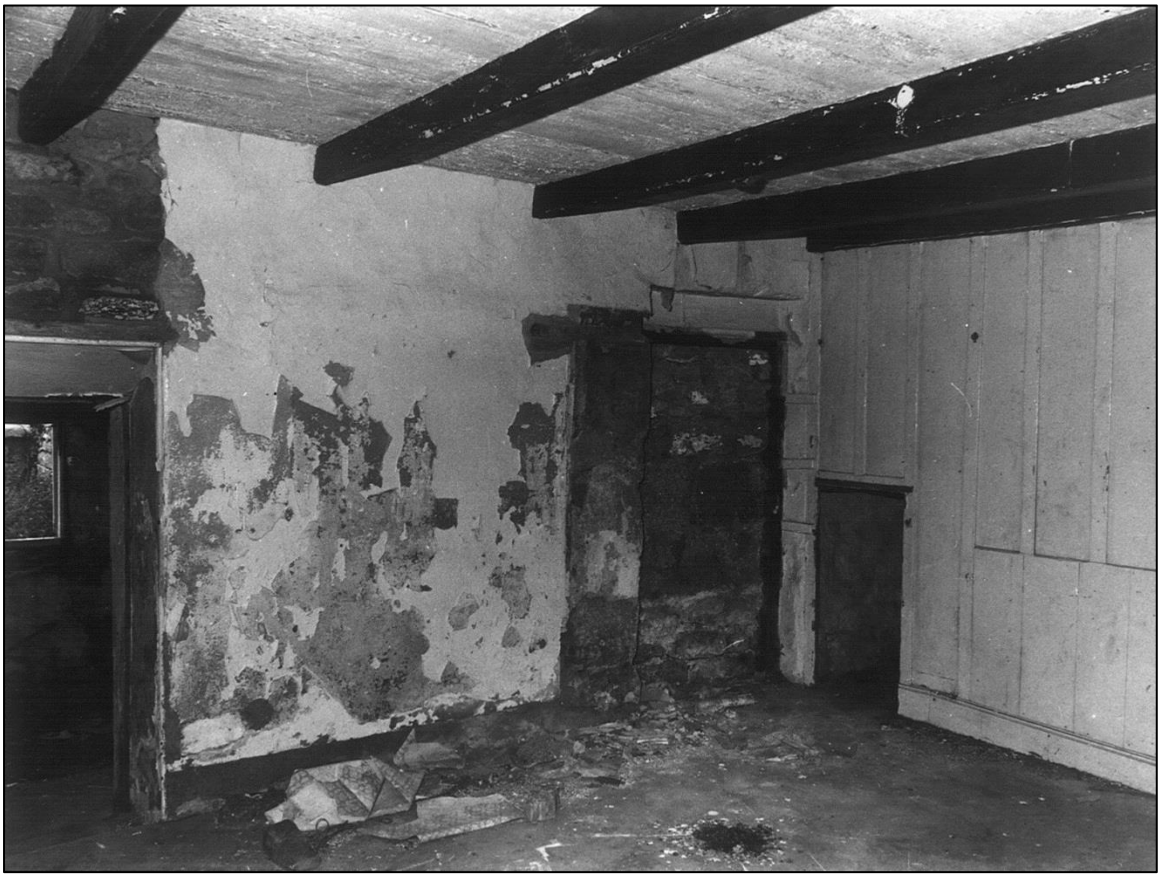
First floor



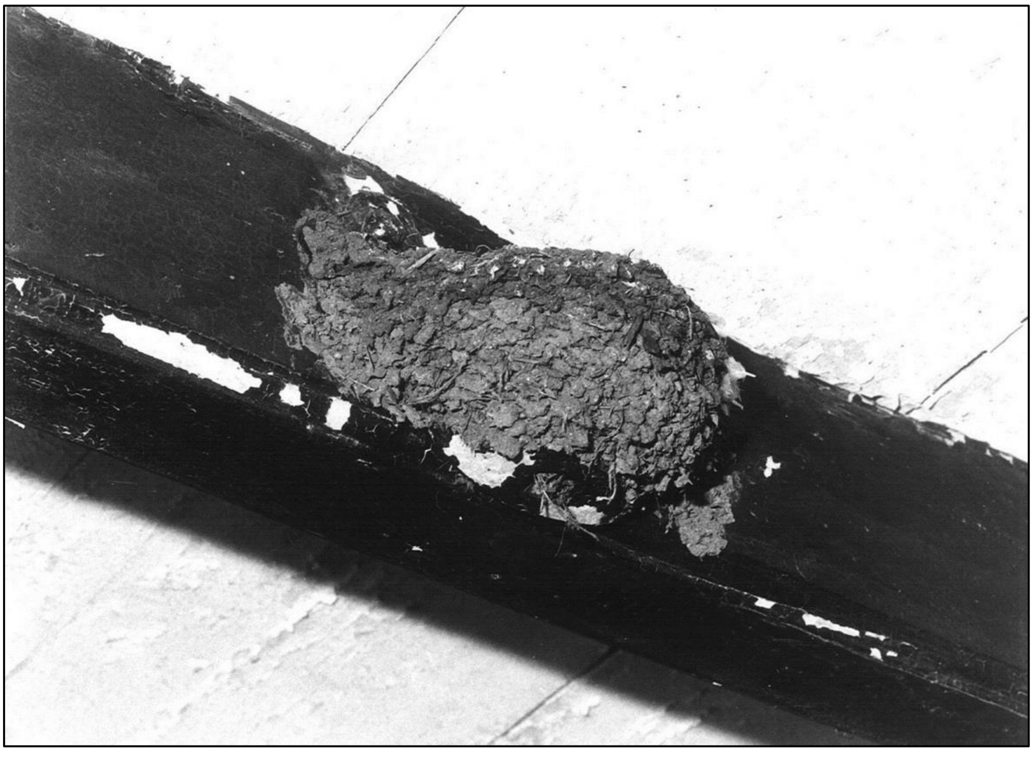
The window has been repaired; the ceiling joists strengthened.



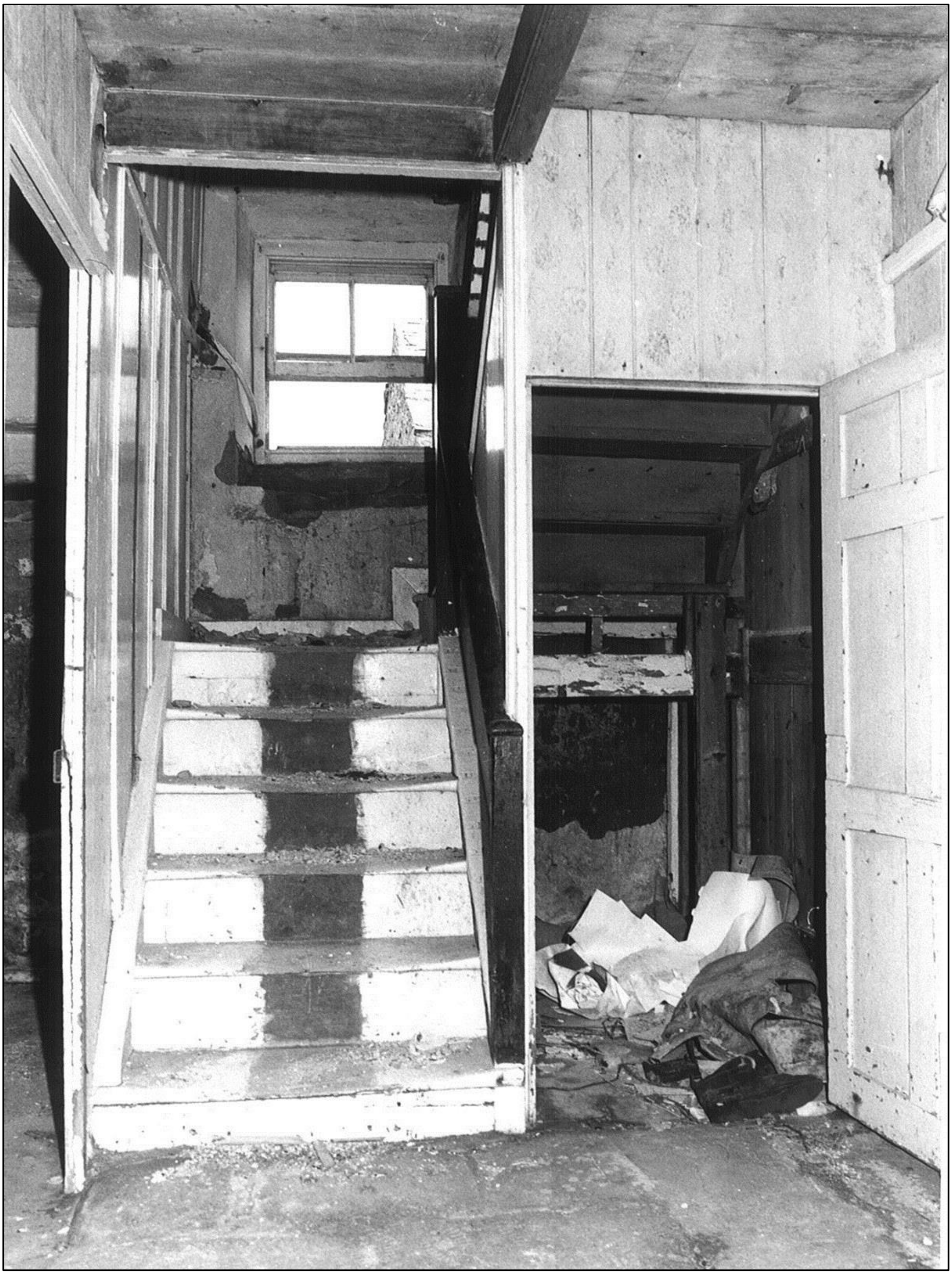
The great stone fireplace lintel is characteristic of many Penwith houses; this one has now been tamed with a wooden surround. The door into the dairy (more recently scullery) has been blocked.



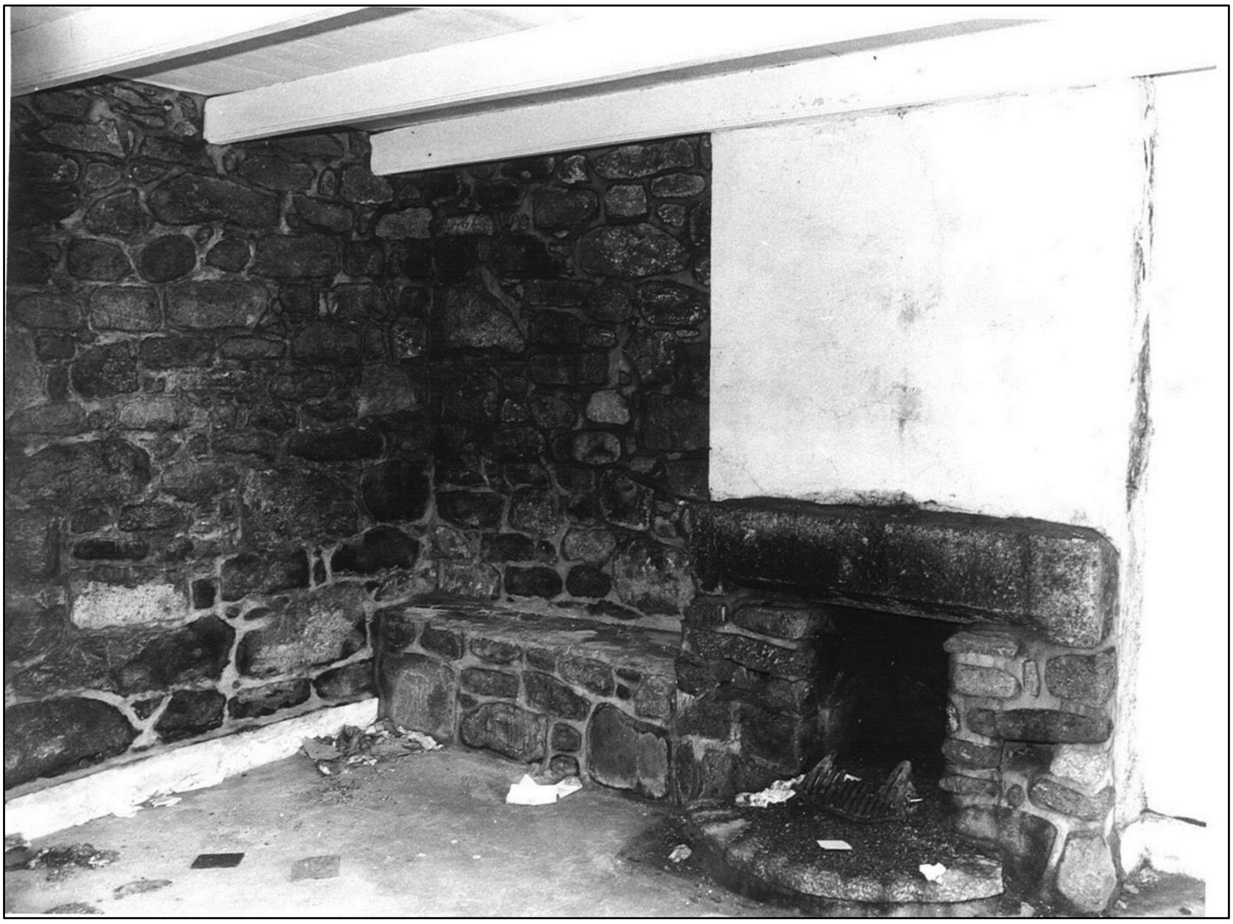
The door into the yard had been blocked but its frame was still intact. All that was needed was a new door. The wooden partition dates from the building of the house c. 1800. The floor once made up of old mill-stones, on top of which concrete had been laid.



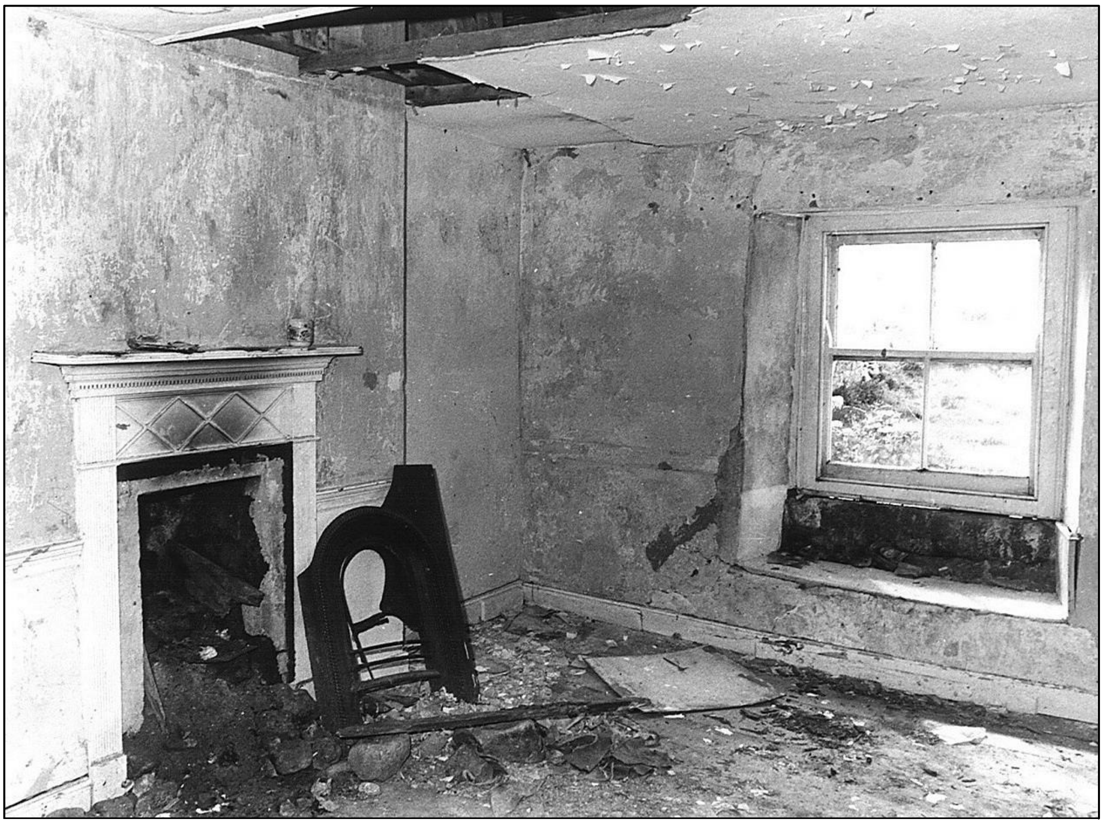
A swallow nested in the kitchen in 1988



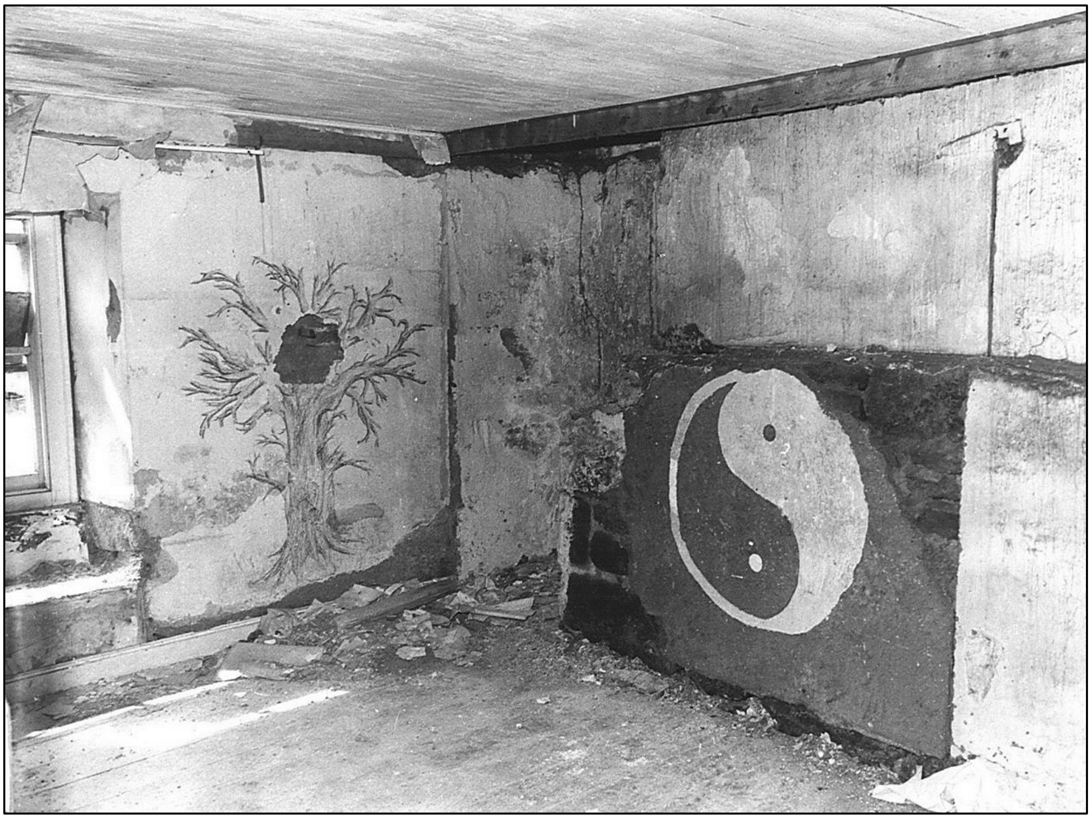
The hall and staircase in 1988.



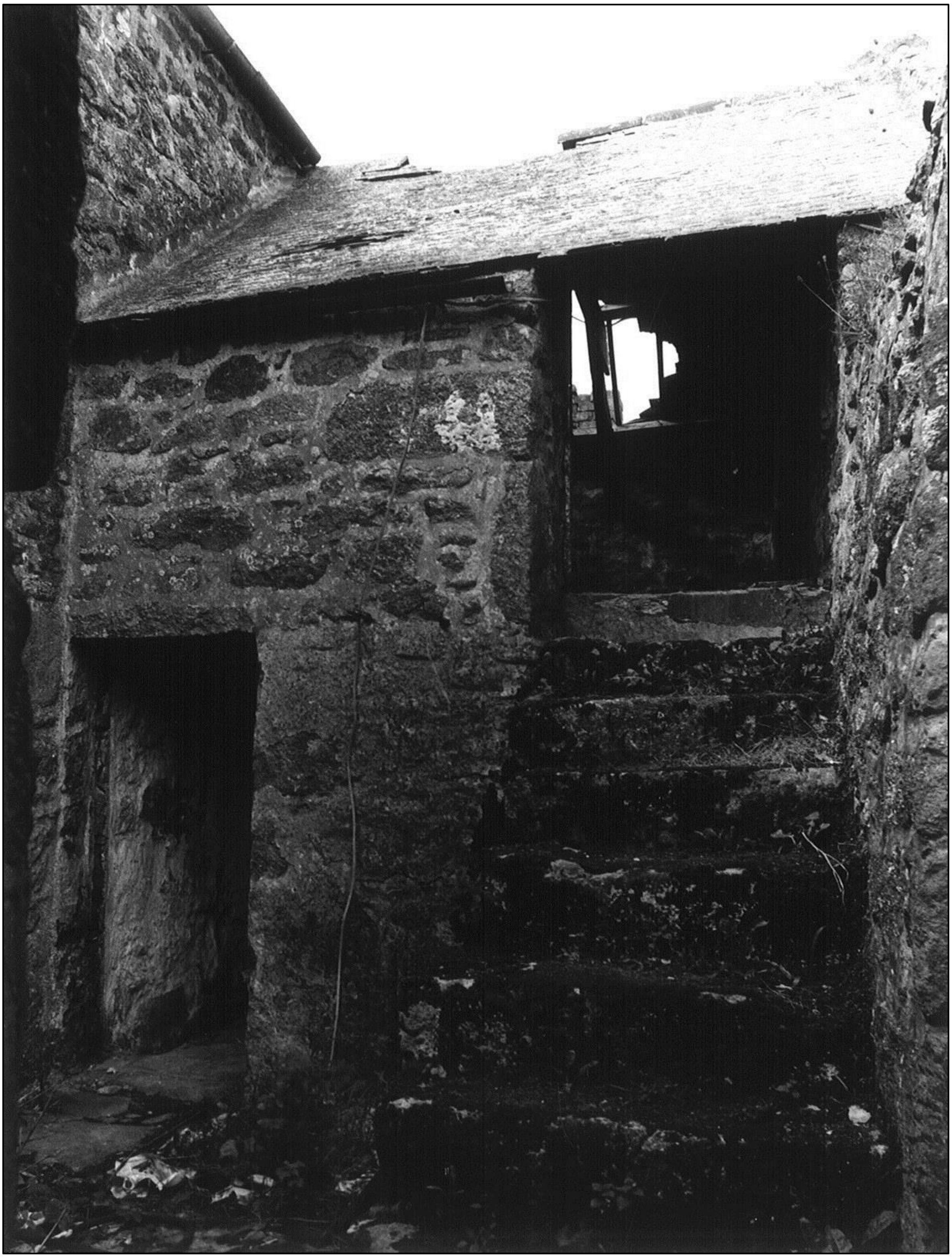
The sitting room



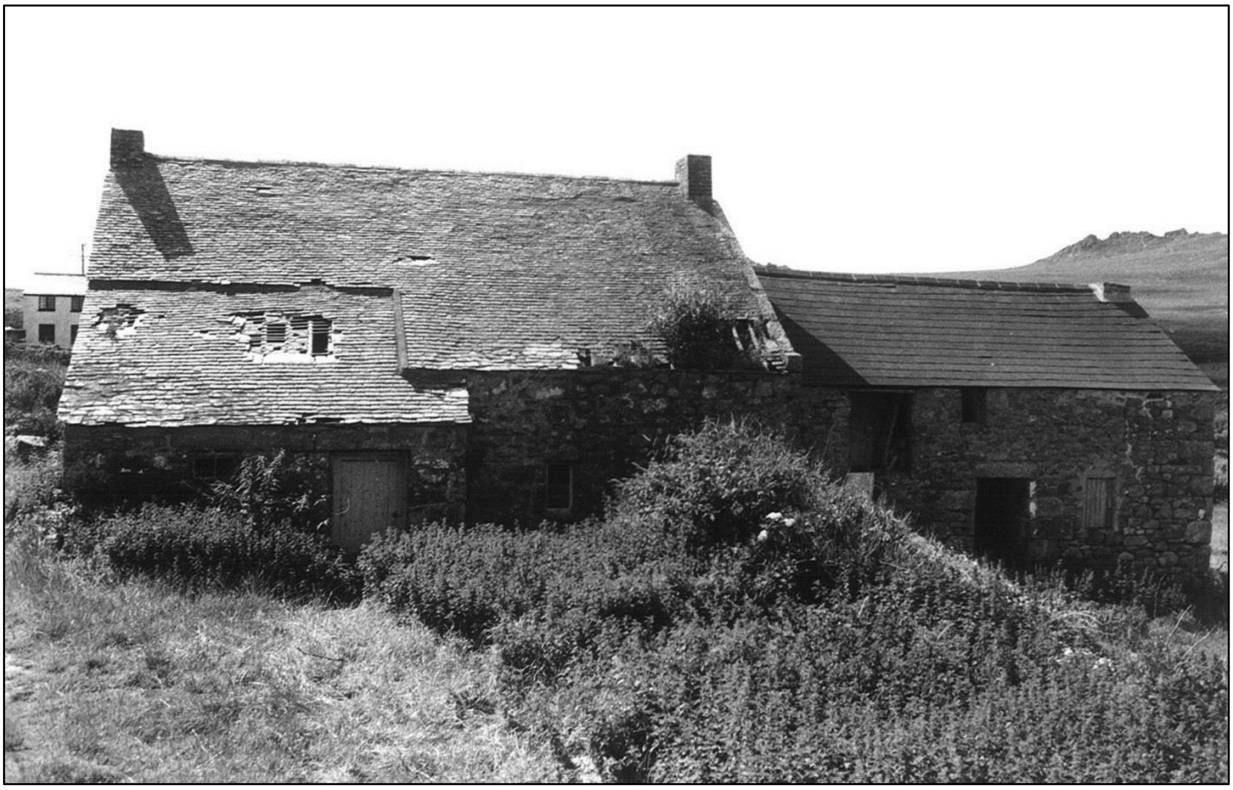
The east bedroom. Mr and Mrs David Berryman attained a level of comfort in their new house undreamed of by their forebears, and probably even their parents.



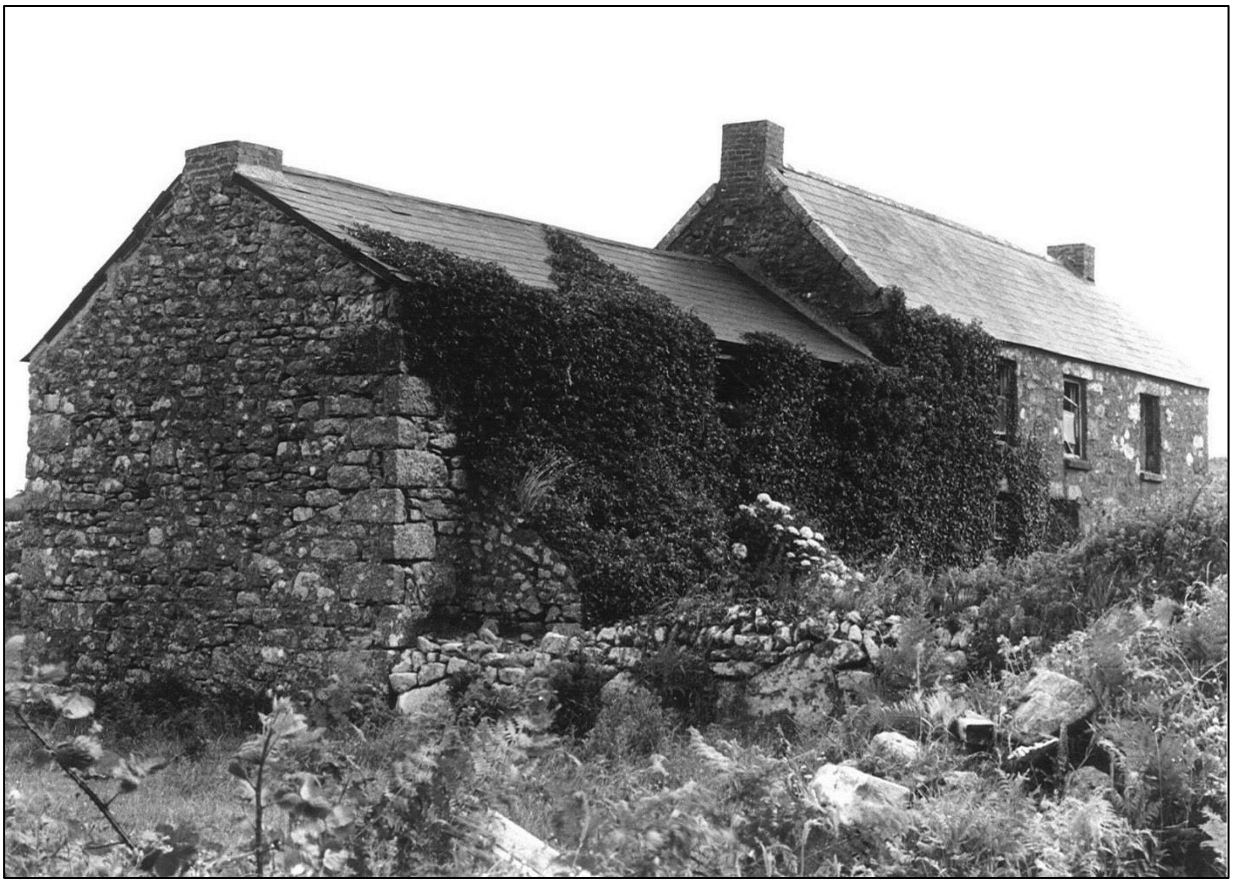
The west bedroom. Squatters had been living in the house and left behind their rather superior graffiti

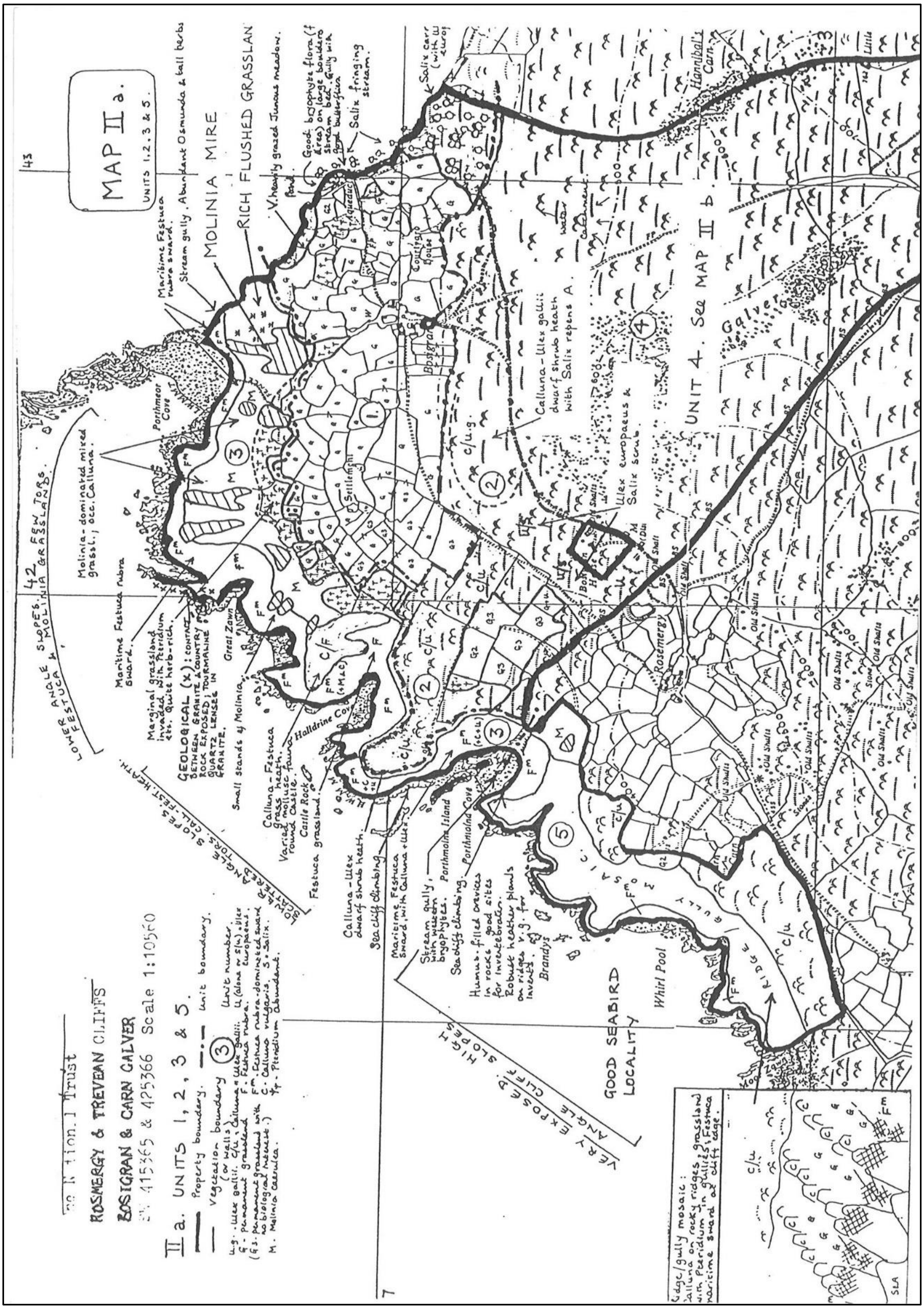


The back yard



The outside house




National Trust
ROSMERGY & TREVEAN CLIFFS
BOSIGRAN & CARN GALVER
II a. UNITS 1, 2, 3 & 5.
Scale 1:10560
Property boundary.
Unit boundary.
Vegetation boundary (or walls)
Unit number.
MAP II a.
UNITS 1.2.3 & 5.
MOLINIA MIRE
RICH FLUSHED GRASSLAND
LOWER ANGLE SLOPES. FESTUCA & MOLINIA
42 FEW TORS. GRASSLAND
Porthmeor Cove
Bosigran
Counthouse
Settlement
Great Zawn
GEOLOGICAL (x): CONTACT BETWEEN GRANITE & COUNTRY ROCK EXPOSED; TOURMALINE QUARTZ LENSES IN GRANITE.
Halldrine Cove
Castle Rock
Porthmoina Island
Porthmoina Cove
Brandys
Whirl Pool
GOOD SEABIRD LOCALITY
VERY EXPOSED ANGLE CLIFF SLOPES HIGH
Rosemergy
Galver
UNIT 4. See MAP II b.
Calluna - Ulex gallii dwarf shrub heath with Salix repens A.
Ulex europaeus & Salix scrub.
Hannibal's Carn
Old Shafts
RIDGE
GULLY

Map from National Trust's Biological Survey, showing flora and fauna of property adjoining Porthmeor.

Geology and Biology

Penwith is as rich in geological and biological terms as it is in archaeology, and detailed books have been written on both subjects. The National Trust has also carried out a Biological Survey of Bosigran, of a similarly high standard to their Archaeological Survey. In briefest summary therefore:

Geology

In most people's minds Penwith equals granite, the Land's End massif being the final mainland outcrop of this rock, aged and weathered into characteristic carns and rock castles. Along the north coast, however, there are outcrops of the slatey country or surface rock through which the granite dome thrust, and which in the process was metamorphised to form a hard greenstone, known locally as killas. Gurnard's Head and the cliffs between it and Porthmeor Cove are of this finer rock, and in the Cove itself there occurs the point at which granite and country rock meet, where the most dramatic effects of contact metamorphosis' can be seen. The granite itself is enriched with (metamorphic) quartzes and crystals, such as tourmaline and mica.

Biology

The chief characteristics are the variety of habitats, and the lack of man's interference with them. The heathlands of the inland hills, and of the coastal headlands; the areas of gorse and scrub; the grasslands (improved and unimproved); the cliff lands; and the valleys cut by streams, with areas of marsh and willow-scrub, and steep uncultivated banks: all these support a rich life of flora and fauna. A walk down to the cove in May produces breathtaking sheets of bluebells (where presumably there was once tree cover); late primroses, cowslips and sea-pinks all growing in the same turf; and many, much rarer treasures. Later in the year the field walls stand in a ruff of foxgloves - and so on throughout the year. The richness is continued in birds, with colonies of sea birds, common and uncommon, and of inland species, of moor and heath as well as farmland and garden; migratory species, and the occasional windblown visitor.

Some pitfalls to be encountered in Archaeological investigation

(from Charles Henderson's Notebooks in the library of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, Vol 11, 1914-17

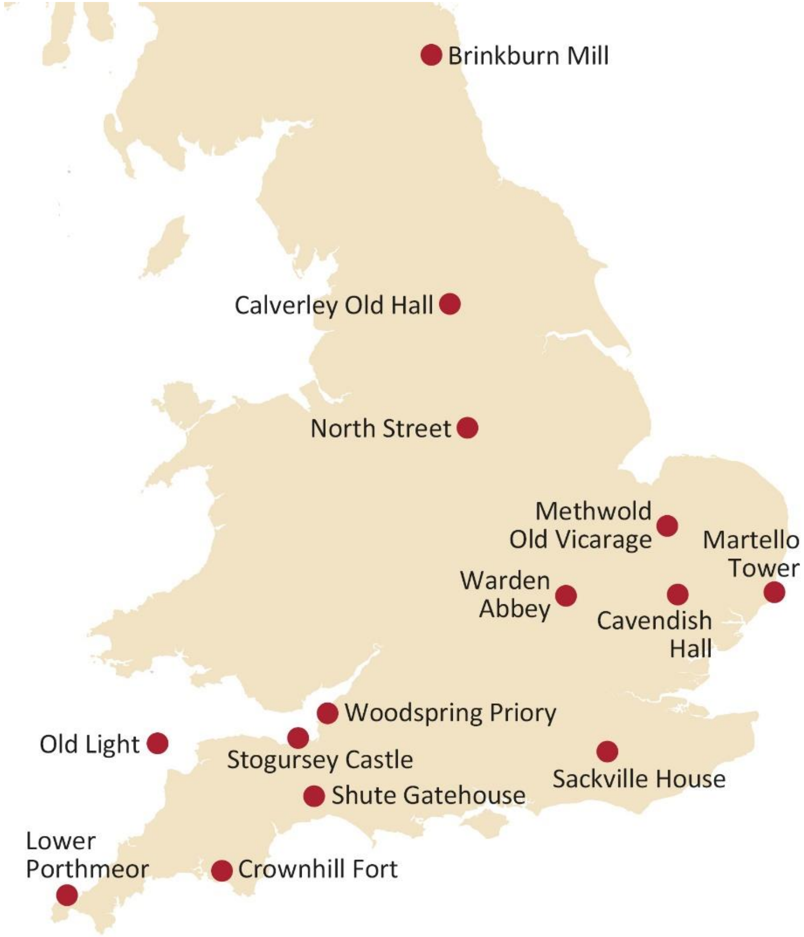
Bosportennis Huts and Cromlech

> ‘The capstone of the monument lies on the ground and is remarkable since it is perfecly circular with a diameter of 5 feet and an even thickness of 6 inches. Mr Borlase in *Naenia Cornubiae* gives an amusing account of the excitement of the local antiquaries on its discovery: Many were the theories put forward until cruel disillusionment came in the shape of an old man who declared that his uncle, a miller at Porthmeor, when in search of a stone for his mill-stone, found the capstone, and thinking it would be suitable, he set to work to make it suitable. When the work was completed, however, he found the stone would not serve his purpose and so he left it there. This story and Mr Borlase's assertion that he himself saw the fragments knocked must be accepted as the truth.’

Acknowledgements

Thanks especially to Mr and Mrs William Berryman for the recent history of Lower Porthmeor, and of their family, and for the loan of Mrs Nankervis's family tree. Thanks also to the National Trust for the loan of their Surveys, Archaeological and Biological, and of Vernacular Buildings. Nicholas Johnson of the Cornwall Archaeology Unit kindly read through this account, and made helpful corrections on archaeological matters. Eric Berry clarified ideas on the development of Penwith buildings, especially the earlier ones.Peter Bird filled in the detail of the restoration work. .Most of the ‘before’ photographs were taken by Bill Newby. Except for published books acknowledged in the text, most of the material for these notes came from manuscript sources, held by the library of the Royal Institution of Cornwall and the County Record Office, both in Truro; the Redruth Local Studies Library has copies of the 19th century census returns on microfilm, and many books on local history and topography.

Landmark and the Culture Recovery Fund 2020-21


Brinkburn Mill
Calverley Old Hall
North Street
Methwold Old Vicarage
Martello Tower
Warden Abbey
Cavendish Hall
Woodspring Priory
Old Light
Stogursey Castle
Sackville House
Shute Gatehouse
Lower Porthmeor
Crownhill Fort

Landmarks that benefitted from the Cultural Recovery Fund 2020-21

2020-21 was the year when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the UK, and for nine months out of twelve, Landmark had to close all its buildings, with a resulting cessation of the holiday income that funds our buildings' maintenance. Vital projects across Britain were put on hold because of the pandemic, because of uncertainty about when contracts could be agreed or when specialist builders and craftspeople would be allowed to work onsite again. The closure of Landmarks for holiday bookings from March to October 2020 and again from December to April 2021 was a devastating blow to our finances and directly impacted Landmark's maintenance budget.

However, in autumn 2020 we were delighted to receive a grant of £1.2million from the government's Culture Recovery Fund, allowing us to reignite our planned maintenance programme and ensure that none of our buildings fell into disrepair.

Under the auspices of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Culture Recovery Fund was designed to secure the future of Britain's museums, galleries, theatres, independent cinemas, heritage sites and music venues with emergency grants and loans. One strand of the Fund was the Heritage Stimulus Fund administered by Historic England, which included the Major Works Programme, source of the grant to Landmark. This transformative grant allowed a group of 15 critical maintenance projects at 17 Landmarks across England to go ahead.

The projects directly provided employment and training for more than 130 craftspeople, including many multi-generation family-run businesses local to our buildings. Masons, carpenters, architects, engineers and many more skilled specialists were involved across these sites, fuelling the recovery of the heritage sector and contributing to local economies on a national scale. Several sites hosted students and apprentices, providing vital opportunities at a time of great uncertainty.

Thanks to the CRF grant, at Lower Porthmeor we were able to undertake a long-wished and transformative project to structurally stabilise, repair and reroof the three linked barns in Delabole slate. We removed failing cement sheet roofing and undertook masonry repairs, installing new timber rafters and purlins in the traditional style. The barns were reroofed with a traditional Cornish scantle slate covering, wet-laid using lime mortar and local Delabole slates.

Given the complexity of the work and its coastal location, a team of specialists were required, all very locally based. Principle contractor Paul Carter, of Paul Carter Construction and Renovation Services Ltd of Treen, brought expert knowledge of the distinct West Penwith vernacular architecture.

Contractor Paul Carter and structural engineer Kathy Gee in conversation under the scaffolding that enclosed the roof structures.

If the stones could speak . . .

Times, 10th July 2004

At first sight, they are anything but exceptional. But these humble Cornish walls may be the world's oldest functioning artefacts. **Sean Thomas** explains

I am standing on a little lane in Penwith, west Cornwall. In front of me is a steep moorland valley that leads down to the sea. All around is a classic west Cornish landscape of small green fields and meandering stone walls. At first glance it seems unexceptional, if beautiful. Yet there are historians who think this valley, and those near by, are unique and uniquely precious. The reason is those humble stone walls, which experts believe may be the oldest human artefacts "still in use" anywhere in the world.

This startling claim was first made by the land-use historian Oliver Rackham in his *The History of the Countryside.* "In the Land's End peninsula," he writes, "there is one of the most impressively ancient farmland landscapes in Europe. The farmland is of tiny irregular pastures separated by great banks, each formed of a row of 'grounders' — huge granite boulders — topped off with lesser boulders and earth."

After discussing how the banks "zigzag and deviate" in order to incorporate the boulders, Rackham concludes: "The banks . . . are contemporary with the field . . . and can be roughly dated by the Bronze Age objects buried inside. These banks, indeed, are among the world's oldest human artefacts still in use."

If it was one lonely historian making this claim, it could possibly be ignored. But Rackham's thesis has been adopted by people in power: the Countryside Agency reiterates the "oldest walls" claim in its latest policy documents for Penwith; the agricultural ministry Defra has done likewise — and also devised a plan for preserving the walls. These developments make the "walls of Penwith" a rural issue as much as an academic debate. Should the walls prove to be as precious as some suggest, woe betide any Penwith farmer who wants to enlarge his fields.

The present state of the Great Walls Debate sees lines drawn between the poetic and the pragmatic wings of British academe. The attitude of the pragmatists is typified by the remarks of Charles Thomas, an expert in Cornish studies. He regards Rackham's claims as excitable hyperbole and asks: "Is such a hypothesis actually testable?"

The more poetic side of the debate is voiced by the Cornwall county archaeologist Peter Rose: "There may be other places that could make similar claims. But what is indubitably true is that the Penwith walls have not been altered in any way since Bronze Age farmers built them. In fact, the whole rural landscape in that area is a unique survival from prehistory."

Everybody, at least, agrees the walls are ancient. But how ancient? The Penwith peninsula is one of the most historically resonant places in the British Isles. Traces of settlement have been detected from the early Stone Age, circa 7,000BC. Flint factories were in operation near Penzance around 2,500BC. By about 2,000BC, new waves of immigrants were streaming for tin on the upland moors; they were also hedging in their livestock to protect them from the bitter Atlantic winds — a task made easier by the many enormous moorstones, which they were able to incorporate within their walls. It's these same boulder-rich walls that we see today.

Four thousand years is a pretty impressive age. But does it make the walls the "oldest human artefacts still in use"? Not necessarily. Archaeologists point to rival claims. In Izmir, west Turkey, for instance, there is a single-slab stone arch bridge over the River Meles, which is meant to be the "oldest bridge on the globe". Yet the best guess is that it dates to about 850BC, some time after the oldest walls at Penwith.

Another claimant to the crown is a network of irrigation ditches in Iraq. Mesopotamian irrigation probably dates back to the 6th millennium BC — much older than the Penwith walls. This sounds promising, but experts still think it unlikely that any of the original Iraqi ditches could have survived so many years of use.

Adrian Thomas farms longhorn cattle in the little green valley of Nanquidno, near St Just. He has no doubt as to the value of the walls. "We are encouraged to protect them under the Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme, but most farmers would protect them anyway. OK, the walls are uncommercial — many of the fields are very small: two turns of a tractor and you're done. But we still need the walls."

As proof, he cites a Lincolnshire farmer who bought a farm near Sennen a few years back. This man tore down the walls, and you can still see the result: the fields are bleak and exposed, the topsoil ravaged by winter gales. So it seems the walls are not just archaeological oddities — they are ecological necessities.

Nevertheless, the ultimate case remains unproven. We may have to wait for carbon dating — and a very big argument — to find out if the "oldest artefacts" thesis is correct. And even then it may come down to intuition — a sense of place. The best way to find out is to visit Zennor — this is where the walls are apparently at their most authentic and impressive. I am walking down the little valley that leads from the churchyard to the sea. In the distance I can hear the wild Atlantic; behind me a songbird is trilling. It feels, clichés notwithstanding, timeless.

But could the reality match the romance? Cheryl Straffon, a writer and historian from west Cornwall, says: "What Defra and Rackham are saying is very bold, and your first instinct as a historian is to reject it. Because there are plenty of artefacts much older than the Penwith walls: pyramids, stone circles, and so on. However, one cannot be sure any of these are still in use, in the way that the Penwith walls are still utilised by Cornish farmers. We would need to get one of the walls scientifically dated to clinch the argument."

KATARINA BOUER

"THE WHOLE RURAL LANDSCAPE IN THAT AREA IS A UNIQUE SURVIVAL FROM PREHISTORY"