



WATCHING THE SUN: TREGESAL

CAROLYN KENNETT (FRAS)

Truthwall Common and Woon Gumpas Common have been occupied since prehistory and a large number of ancient monuments remain in this area. This tour introduces you to some of the more impressive sites. Many of them have a possible connection to the Sun, particularly the winter solstice, especially the stone circles, where people could have gathered to celebrate this festival.

WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY Carolyn Kennett (FRAS) with **Mayes Creative** as part of the **Measuring the Universe** programme, which explores the ways we have tried to make sense of distances in the Universe and the part Cornwall played in making these measurements

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Please be responsible when visiting ancient sites, take nothing but photos, leave only footprints.

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Jamie Ashley, JT Blight Week at Landsend.
Map taken from Googlemaps.



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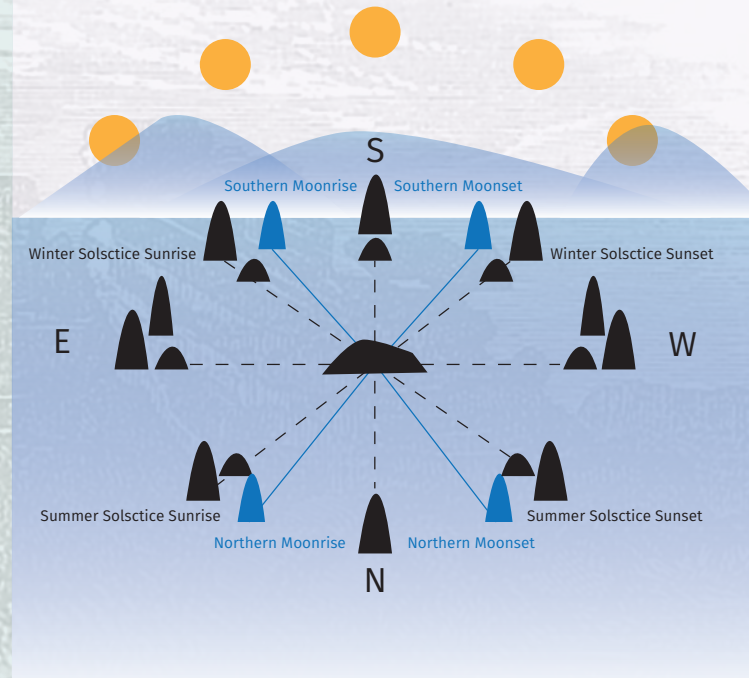
PREHISTORY AT TREGESEAL

During prehistory, many ancient stone monuments were built and these can be seen across the length and breadth of Cornwall. The landscape around Tregeseal is incredibly special as it has a wide range of prehistoric remains all in close proximity to each other. This includes stone circles, barrows, standing stones and a stone row. The location for these monuments is equally impressive, as it has outstanding views of Land's End and on a clear day the Isles of Scilly can be seen. It is suggested that some of the monuments have links to celestial objects particularly the Sun. By considering how astronomy relates to the monuments we try to make sense of what they left behind, even though the purpose and meaning may have been lost through time.



THE SUN

The Sun is an ever present object in our life. It provides daylight, heat and is essential to our survival. The Earth orbits around the Sun each year. It does this with a 23.5 degree tilt, which gives us seasons and here in Cornwall the Sun has a different rising and setting point each day. It will rise in the east and set in the west at equinox, nearest the summer solstice it will rise in the north-east and set in the north-west. At the winter solstice it will rise in the south-east and set in the southwest. A number of sites around Tregeseal have alignments with the Sun.



ARCHAEOASTRONOMY

Archaeoastronomy attempts to understand the secrets that have been locked into ancient monuments by studying their position and design and linking this to the sky and landscape around them. The stone monuments in our landscape leave us clues as to how our predecessors did this. Many, we know, have been aligned to indicate positions of objects in the sky, the most common being stones that are aligned with the solar cycle, such as the Heel Stone at Stonehenge marking a solstice point. Other stones are linked to the lunar cycle and some are suggested to have links with other celestial objects such as planets and stars. Monuments may have marked seasonal changes, been used as a calendar, or created a spiritual place with connections to the afterlife.



MEASURING THE UNIVERSE



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4 CARN KENIDJACK

This impressive rocky outcrop is also known as the Hooting Carn, as the wind whistles through it making a hooting sound. There is one possible addition and that is a propped stone which sits on the northern end of the feature.

SW 3879 3297
50°08'20.9"N 5°39'25.2"W



5 TREGESEAL STONE CIRCLES

Tregeseal was once a multiple circle site, now only the eastern one remains. The northern horizon is framed by Carn Kenidjack and Carn Bean. There is a sea gap towards the south-west. On a clear day and within the sea gap you can see the Isles of Scilly, located 26 miles off the coast. In the Bronze Age the winter solstice Sun would set directly over the centre of the islands.

SW 3866 3237
50°08'01.1"N 5°39'31.0"W



1 CHÛN QUOIT

Chun Quoit is a Neolithic dolmen, located on Woon Gumpas just outside Pendeen. It sits on a ridgeway with extensive views. Standing here on the winter solstice you will see the Sun set behind the rocky outcrop, Carn Kenidjack.

SW 4022 3396
50°08'54.8"N 5°38'15.8"W



2 BOSWEN'S MENHIR

A single menhir, which sits on a cairn of stones. This stone is in the May day position when looking from Tregeseal stone circle, from Nine Maidens stone circle it is in the winter solstice sunset position.

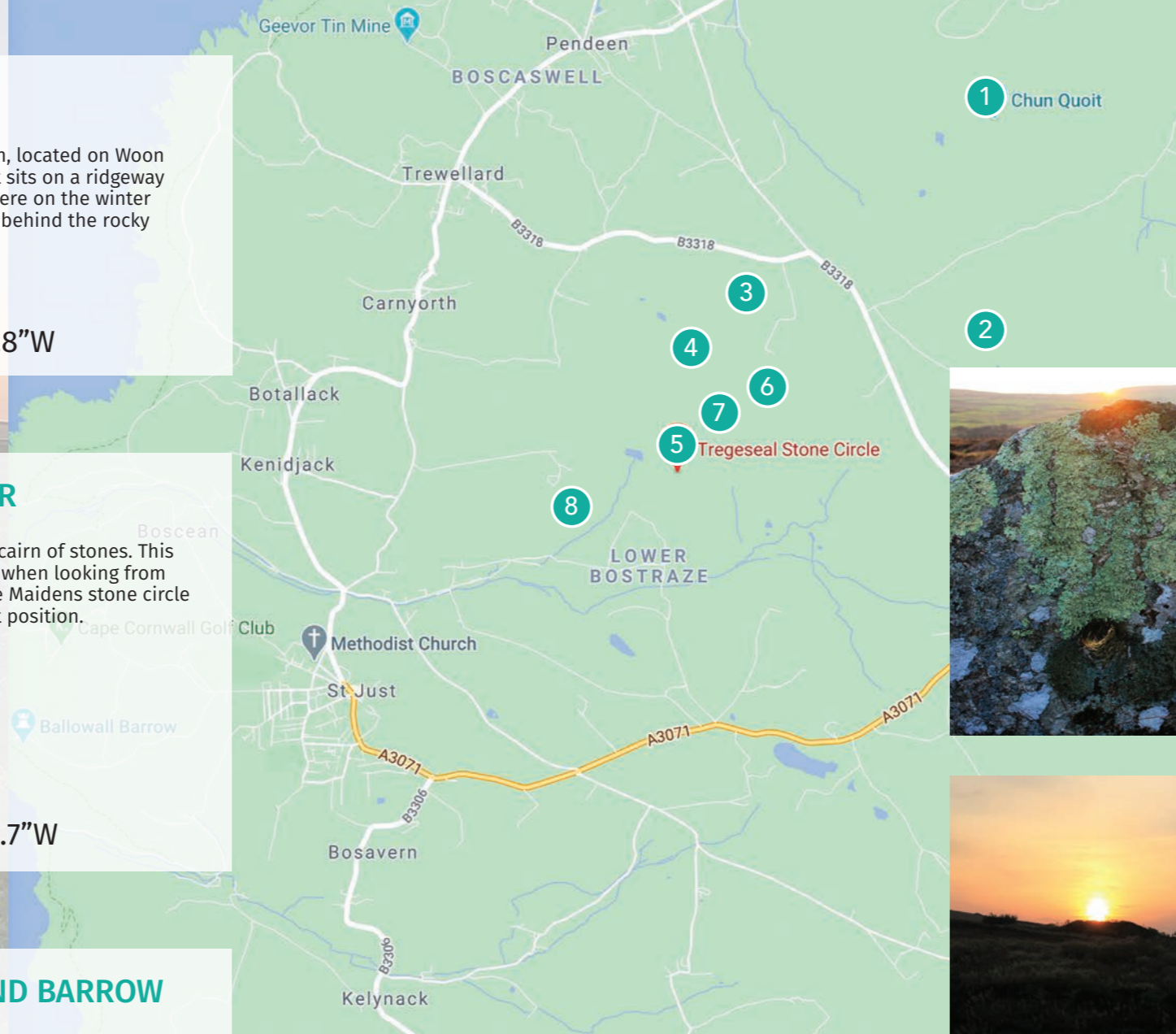
SW 4001 3289
50°08'20.5"N 5°38'23.7"W



3 PORTHERAS ROUND BARROW

The next stop on the tour is a large round barrow with a cist in the middle. This was excavated in the 19th century and a cup marked stone was found within it.

SW 3914 3326
50°08'30.9"N 5°39'08.4"W



6 KENIDJACK HOLED STONES

A stone row made up of four holed stones and one outlier. The exact original position of each stone is unsure, but it is likely the two end stones are unmoved. The holes could have been used to line up with the rising Sun. So on certain dates the Sun would shine through the hole casting a beam of light on the shadow behind. The position of the stone row suggests that this could have been a countdown calendar to the winter solstice.

SW 3901 3262
50°08'09.7"N 5°39'13.4"W



7 TREGESEAL BARROWS

There are two barrows located to the north-east of the stone circles. They are in line with the summer solstice sunset when you stand in the stone circle. The one next to the stone row is more intact than the second.

SW 3818 3257
50°08'08.3"N 5°39'18.5"W



8 TREGESEAL PASSAGE GRAVE

This is an excellent example of a Scillonian passage grave. The chamber is orientated towards the winter solstice sunrise. This site is on private land and permission must be sought before visiting it.

SW 3804 3214
50°07'52.9"N 5°40'00.6"W