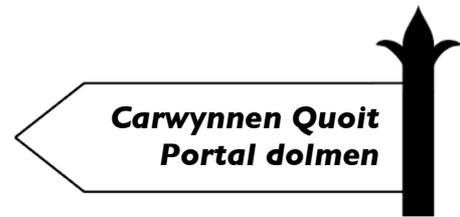




THE
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Signposts to Prehistory

Location: Carwynnen Quoit is situated on the old Pendarves Estate (post-code TR14 9LR) to the south of Camborne, Cornwall (SW 65014 37213).

Main period: Neolithic

Access & ownership: The nearest parking place is Treslothan Church, Troon. Thence by foot, turn right along the public footpath at Treslothan Well just uphill from the church; carry along the footpath skirting a field and then follow through Stennack Woods; when the footpath meets a lane, turn right for a short stretch along the lane before reaching the entrance to the field in which the monument sits (approximately 15 minute walk from Treslothan church). The monument is located in a field with open public access which is owned by The Sustainable Trust ('Sustrust'); there is an information board at the field entrance and no entrance fee. To arrange guided group visits or to find out more about forthcoming events please contact Sustrust at pip.sustrust@gmail.com and check out the project website for up to date information about the Carwynnen project www.giantsquoit.org. Teachers can download an educational pack from the website. An app with walks around the area has also been developed. A new project exploring the wider Lost Landscapes of Pendarves is currently in development.



Fig. 1. Moment of truth! 3pm 21st June 21st 2014. The 10 tonne capstone at last is restored to its rightful place at Carwynnen Quoit in front of a crowd of over 600 visitors from near and far. Photo: © Colin Higgs

Carwynnen Quoit is a Neolithic portal dolmen, believed to be the earliest type of stone monument in south-western Britain. It is also a Scheduled Monument (Cornwall 396). For a long

time it was one of Cornwall's lesser known megalithic sites partly due to its remote location on the edge of the Carvenellis uplands on rough moorland, but also because for over 50 years it was little more than a neglected pile of stones on private land. This ruin and the land were bought by a local environmental and educational charity, The Sustainable Trust ('Sustrust'), with the help of Heritage Lottery Funding, in 2009. The Sustrust subsequently developed a project in collaboration with the Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council to restore the monument and use it as a focus for educational events and community projects. Between 2012 and 2015, hundreds of local people of all ages and with many different perspectives have been involved.

Carwynnen has had an intriguing history over the last 300 years. It was first noted by Welsh antiquarian Edward Lhuyd in his travels around Cornwall in the 1700s and was first surveyed by Cornish antiquarian William Borlase in the 1750s. Borlase's engraving shows it as an open chamber characterised by a table-like capstone supported by three uprights. He and other antiquarians clearly recognised it to be similar to the better-known megalithic tombs of the region, such as Chun, Lanyon and Mulfra quoits which all lie high up on the Penwith moors, some 20 km to the west. Carwynnen Quoit collapsed in the early 19th century and was then re-erected, but the monument collapsed again in the mid 1960s, and as a result of its inaccessibility, the site lay dormant for 50 years.

A detailed measured survey of the stones and a geophysical survey were carried out by members of the Cornwall Archaeological Society in 2009. In July 2012, after scheduled monument consent was obtained, the Carwynnen team dug test pits across the field as well as around the stone pile in order to assess the impact of recent ploughing on the survival of ancient land surfaces. Results were encouraging as numerous flints and some prehistoric pottery were located around the quoit as well as across the entire field. Two months later the principal stones, comprising three granite uprights and the tabular capstone, were identified and set aside for further study. Ensuing excavations in September 2012 discovered the original socket holes in which the three uprights once stood as well as the partial but remarkable remains of an original stone pavement made up of thousands of small rounded granite balls and pieces of quartz. Pieces of burnt and snapped flint tools as well as small pieces of pottery dating to the Early Neolithic, later Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages were also found scattered on and around the pavement. It was remarkable that this had largely escaped disturbance during the 19th century restoration. Work continued with the re-erection of one upright in its original socket hole in 2013 and the other two uprights followed in early 2014. The finale was the placing of the massive 10 ton capstone which was reinstated during a joyous community event on a perfect midsummer's day in 2014. Burnt bone found at the rear of the stone pavement in 2014 was scientifically dated by AMS radiocarbon dating to the middle to late Neolithic and while this date (3025–2916 cal BC) does not date the construction of the original monument, it does confirm Carwynnen's rightful place in the pantheon of Cornish megaliths.

The first stage of the Sustrust's vision for Carwynnen has been achieved and is the first step towards a future project which will explore the surrounding landscape. The nearest known Neolithic site to Carwynnen is the extraordinary enclosed 'settlement' on Carn Brea which lies 6km to the north-east on the edge of Camborne town. On current evidence the two sites may be linked as pottery found at Carwynnen is similar to that found at Carn Brea during excavations directed by Roger Mercer for the Cornwall Archaeological Society there over 40 years ago (Mercer 1981).

The full story of the excavation and restoration of Carwynnen is currently being written up and will be published in the county journal *Cornish Archaeology* in due course. In the meantime a fully illustrated account of the restoration project at Carwynnen is now available (see below).

References and further information

- A Monument like no other – The Restoration of Carwynnen Quoit The Sustainable Trust 2012-2014* is available from The Sustrust contact pip.sustrust@gmail.com. ISBN 978-0-9930552-0-1. Compiled by The Sustrust and Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council.
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Carwynnen Quoit: www.giantsquoit.org

Carwynnen Quoit Facebook: www.facebook.com/carwynnenquoit

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