

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Blisland Commoners Association manages fourteen historic areas of moorland, commons and downland that constitute ten areas of registered Common Land in the parishes of Blisland, St Breward, Temple and St Neot (formerly Cardinham detached) on Bodmin Moor, Cornwall.

Both natural and man-made features bound these areas of moorland. The natural features include rivers, streams and outcrops of rock, while the man-made features include archaeological remains, hedges, banks and boundary stones. Of the boundary stones marking the Blisland Commons, some are medieval and include stone crosses, although the large majority are post-medieval. The post-medieval boundary stones are usually simple pillars of granite, inscribed with letters or symbols denoting the name of the landowner or the manorial estate. These landscape features have never been fully recorded, or set in context with the land they bound, either in Blisland or elsewhere in Cornwall. Some have fallen over, while others have entirely disappeared.

The 'Blisland Commons Boundary Stone Project' is the initiative of The Blisland Commoners Association. It was first devised during the summer of 2004 and was the subject of a successful Local Heritage Initiative application in October of that year. In summary, the aim of the project was to record and photograph all the existing boundary stones on Blisland Commons, and re-erect those that had fallen over. The results of this project are described in this report.

These post-medieval boundary stones are an integral part of the Bodmin Moor landscape and are a legacy of both the manorial and industrial evolution of the land. Few if any have any legal protection and until recently have not been considered of sufficient age or interest to be recorded. However, locally in the north Cornwall area there has been some interest shown in them. Both Mrs Pamela Bousfield of St Breward and the late Mr Frank Smeeth of Camelford took an active interest in them and this led to several boundary stones in Davidstow parish being re-erected. This was through a project led by Mr David Attwell of the North Cornwall Heritage Coast and Countryside Service with the assistance of Mr Smeeth and Mr Harold

Lane of Camelford.¹ In the Historic Environment Service's forthcoming publication *Bodmin Moor, an archaeological survey volume 2*, Herring² recommends that 'photographs and descriptions of all such stones will provide a valuable record which will assist in ensuring their conservation, and will help re-create early modern manorial subdivisions of the Downs'. To date, the Historic Environment Service has only twenty-seven boundary stones throughout the county recorded in the Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record (HER) and only those on Manor Common within the area of this project.³

Furthermore, in many cases local people and even the landowners and commoners working on and around the moor do not know the history of these boundary stones. Many do not know, by whom, when or why they were erected and what the letters and symbols carved upon them represent. Clearly there has been a need to record and research these boundary stones before all knowledge of their history is lost. Hence it was the aim of this project to identify, with the aid of volunteers, who, when and why these boundary stones were erected, and to raise awareness in the local community. It is because of these reasons that the project gained the backing of the Local Heritage Initiative.

1.2 Scope and Limitations of the project

The area covered by the project is all land within Blisland Commons, that is the fourteen commons that make up the ten registered areas of common land all on the north side of the A.30 highway. They include, Tencreek Downs, Trehudreth Downs, Greenbarrow Downs, Newton Downs, Manor Common, Metherin Downs, Kerrow Downs, Shallow Water Common, Brockabarrow Common, all in the parish of Blisland. Also Emblance Downs and Lady Down in the parish of St Breward, Menacrin Downs in the parish of Temple and Sprey Moor in the parish of St Neot (Cardinham detached), see fig.1.

¹ Messrs Attwell, Smeeth and Lane re-erected several boundary stones in Davidstow parish in April 1993, including one alongside the old aerodrome, and another near the stream at Roughtor Ford. These were all parish bound stones rather than manorial bound stones.

² Peter Herring in chapter 12, 'The future – protection, management, presentation, further research' by Peter Herring, Nicholas Johnson, Adam Sharpe, and John R. Smith in Herring, P., Sharpe, J, Smith, J. R., forthcoming, *Bodmin Moor, an archaeological survey, volume 2, the industrial and post-medieval landscapes*, English Heritage and Cornwall County Council.

³ The H.E.R. is held at the Historic Environment Service (formerly the Cornwall Archaeological Unit) at Old County Hall, Truro.

Project Proposal

Aims and Objectives

- Produce a community-based project.
- Survey and record all the boundary stones on the Blisland Commons.
- Re-instate boundary stones that have fallen over.
- Provide replacement boundary stones where the original ones have become lost.
- Name each parcel of Common Land by inscribing a suitable boulder within each area.
- Actively encourage community involvement.
- Promote the project through local schools and educational facilities.
- Develop a Creative Arts based project with Blisland School.
- Provide a local exhibition or display at Blisland to procure information for the final report.
- Finally, produce a report recording the history of the various groups of boundary stones, their context in the landscape, and the areas of Common Land that they bound.
- The report will also include the results of the survey, with photographs of the boundary stones and the practical projects undertaken.
- The report will be published within a web site on the World Wide Web and a limited number of hard-copies will be produced for local libraries, the Commons Association and other interested parties.

Impact of the project

- The project will highlight the significance of these features to the wider community.
- The project will set the boundary stones in context, and bring together a range of local people to help preserve this part of Bodmin Moor's heritage.
- The publication of the project report on the World Wide Web will provide public awareness not only locally and nationally but also potentially to everyone.
- The project report will also provide a record that will aid the future management of the boundary stones on Bodmin Moor.
- The project report, produced as a hard copy and deposited in local libraries, will also become a valuable resource for future research.

Method

The project will involve professional researchers, local volunteers, local contractors and tradesmen, as well as consultation with the local authority, landowners, commoners and the parish councils.

The project will be divided up into a number of key stages, these will include:

- Desk-based assessment (preliminary research).
- Field-based and community survey of all the boundary stones on each area of Common Land.
- Collating the results of the survey.
- Further documentary research and analysis.
- Clearance of vegetation from around certain boundary stones.
- Erecting fallen boundary stones.
- Procuring and erecting replacement boundary stones.
- Carving of letters / symbols on replacement boundary stones.
- Carving the names of individual commons on suitable granite boulders in each area of Common Land.
- Promoting the project through a Creative Arts based project with Blisland School.
- Production of a small exhibition or display prior to producing the final report.
- Producing a web-site on the World Wide Web.
- Production of the final report for publication on the web-site, with a limited number of hard-copies.
- Revitalising tradition and heritage through performing the 'Beating of the bounds'.

Desk-based assessment

This will be a preliminary investigation by the researchers, primarily looking at all the available early maps of the Common Land to collate all the known boundary stones and sites. This will include gaining access to:

- The Parish Tithe Apportionment Maps of Blisland, St Breward, Temple, St Neot and Cardinham at the County Record Office.

- Common Land maps and registers.
- The First edition 1813 Ordnance Survey maps.
- 25 inch Ordnance Survey maps of 1880s and 1907.
- Any known Estate Maps.
- Maps / plans of mineral bounds, especially tin and china clay bounds.
- Constraints such as whether any stones are protected, scheduled or listed.

The results of this investigation will be used as the basis of the field-based community survey of the fourteen areas of Common Land.

Survey

Each area of Common Land will be walked and the boundary stones examined, while any former sites will be recorded. A checklist or proforma will be filled out at each site and the following details will be collected for each stone / site.

- A photograph of each of the four sides of each boundary stone. (digital images will be taken for the web site along with black and white photographs for archive records.
- A sketch indicating any inscriptions will be produced on-site.
- A short written description of each stone, including type of stone.
- Any additional features will be recorded such as drill marks, re-use of the stone in an earlier feature etc.
- The dimensions of each boundary stone.
- Orientation of each boundary stone and its National Grid Reference.

Furthermore, a record of any additional stone artefacts deemed to be significant and worthy of note, will be collected, including part-worked granite millstones, troughs etc. Finally, these results will be collated by each parcel of Common Land, and will also be plotted on maps of each Common. Examples will be published on the web-site.

Archive research

This will include:

- Researching all known resources to produce a history of the boundary stones and the land they enclose.

- Identify the historical context of the boundary stones chronologically, through accessing resources, in particular at the Historical Environment Service of Cornwall County Council.
- Identify the significance of the boundary stones in the landscape through researching existing publications, surveys and reports about Bodmin Moor.
- Where possible, identify who was responsible for commissioning these boundary stones and who struggled to set them up, through accessing manorial / estate records and private landowners records.
- Access public resources such as The County Record Office, Local Studies Library and the Sites and Monuments Record.
- Access private resources such as the Courtney Library at the Royal Institution of Cornwall, China clay archives at Wheal Martyn, St Austell and the Morrab Library, Penzance.

Additional local research will be gathered from those working and living on the moor through interviews, correspondence and at the public exhibition / display.

Practical work

- Where a fallen boundary stone has been identified, it will be re-instated using volunteer labour and professional help.
- Granite posts donated by local farmers and landowners will be adapted as replacement boundary stones.
- The appropriate letters or symbols will be carved on the replacement boundary stones by a local craftsman, to denote the landowner, manor or estate.
- These boundary stones will be set up by local volunteers at known sites where maps indicate that formerly a boundary stone existed.
- A local stonemason will be commissioned to carve the names of each moor or common on a suitable *in situ* granite boulder at each site.
- Where such a boulder does not exist, a suitable stone will be acquired either by donation or purchase and transported to site with the aid of voluntary labour.
- Any replacement stones will be dated by the stonemason so that there can be no confusion with the original boundary stones.

Community involvement

Local people will be encouraged at all stages to take an interest in the project and participate where appropriate. Local knowledge, archive material such as photographs and maps etc. will be sought from moorland communities to aid the production of the final report and the project as a whole.

Creative Arts project

Taking characters and elements of the landscape, a writer will be employed to develop a story with the children of Blisland School. This will build upon the theme of 'boundaries' and generate a greater sense of place between the pupils and their parish. Work flowing from these sessions will then form the backdrop to the creation of a physical piece of artwork. This will be erected in the school grounds and will involve the children in its creation. Using a local metal sculptor from within the parish an inspirational 'boundstone' will be crafted from copper and tin reflecting the range of marks to be found on the moor. As part of this process there will be an attempt to source and smelt tin from the moor which will be incorporated into the art piece.

This element of the project will again involve the community as storytellers, guides and helpers and the story will also be told through the website in words and images.

On completion of the boundary stones project it is anticipated that the traditional ceremony of the 'beating of the bounds' will take place on the Commons. Local people and organisations will be encouraged to take part, thus increasing public awareness of these heritage assets on Bodmin Moor.

Health and Safety

Risk assessments will be undertaken to cover the various aspects of the project including the field-based community survey, re-instatement of boundary stones and the beating of the bounds. Public Liability Insurance will be obtained by the Commoners Association.

Production of the final report

The production of the report will be undertaken by professional researchers and will include the following:

- A general description of each area of Common Land, including its topographical features.
- A description of and summary of the history of each boundary.
- A description of the different types of boundary stone on each Common.
- The history of each group of boundary stones, including, why, when and by whom they were set up, if known.
- A note setting the boundary stones in context with the landscape.
- Future recommendations for the future preservation of the boundary stones.
- Maps indicating the distribution of the boundary stones.
- The results of the field-based community survey.
- A record of all the practical work undertaken, such as setting up fallen and replacement boundary stones, and the inscribing of the names of the commons on granite boulders.
- A gazetteer including photographs of the boundary stones recorded through the survey.

The full report will be published on a web-site and a limited number of hard copies will be produced for the local libraries, resource centres and interested parties.

2. Desktop Survey

The essential first stage of the project was the desktop survey:- an assessment of what boundary stones are recorded on the fourteen areas of common land that form Blisland Commons. Although some documents were examined, such as the Trehudreth Downs court transcription, the main sources consulted were, the parish tithe maps, large scale Ordnance Survey maps, as well as earlier cartographical sources.

2.1 The parish tithe maps

The earliest large scale maps of Blisland Commons are the Parish Tithe Apportionment maps that date from the early 1840s. There are usually three versions of these, a parish copy, a diocesan copy and a commissioners copy. These varied in quality and accuracy, the Commissioners copies were referred to as first class maps and were considered accurate enough for legal purposes and were to a scale of 3 chains to an inch or 1:2500. The parish and diocese copies were often second class maps, usually drawn from existing town or estate maps with updates and extra boundaries. Areas of waste land i.e. moorland, and wastrels

were less accurately drawn (8 or 12 chains to the inch), with the surveyors giving more attention to the inhabited areas.⁴ Accompanying each tithe map is a document known as the Award or Apportionment schedule, that records, the number and name of each field and area of land, acreage, landowner, leasee, occupier, state of cultivation and rent-charge payable.

For the purposes of this survey, the parish copies of the Blisland, St Breward and Temple maps were examined at the Cornwall Record Office, along with microfilm copies of the Commissioners copies for Blisland, St Breward, Temple, Cardinham and St Neot.⁵ The condition of each of the parish tithe maps and their size and quality varied a great deal. Both the Blisland and St Breward maps are large (like rolled up carpets). The Blisland copy is badly torn with some detail missing and patched in places (Shallow Water Common area), the St Breward map has been remounted and is in a much better condition. The Temple map is clearly a less expensive version with pencil drawing rather than indian ink and is much smaller in size (relating to the size of the parish) and in the best condition. Although few man-made features are recorded on tithe maps, boundary stones are an exception and were deemed necessary as they indicated land boundaries; each is marked as a small rectangular outline of a post, although their style varies from map to map. Buildings and other structures are usually omitted.

2.2 Ordnance Survey mapping

In addition to the tithe maps, copies of the Ordnance Survey 1880 and 1907, 25 inch to the mile maps were also examined. These maps are very accurate and are much more detailed than the tithe maps, they show buildings, the type of vegetation, footpaths (not necessarily public) etc. Both the 1880 and the 1907 editions are very similar, with the 1880 edition being darker and busier due to the more dense symbols used for vegetation.⁶ These maps mark the boundary stones with either the word *Stone* or *BS* in italics.

⁴ Information from course on 'Maps and Mapping in Cornwall' by Colin Edwards at the Cornwall Record Office, February 2001.

⁵ The original Commissioners Tithe Maps are held in the Public Record Office at Kew.

⁶ The project team appreciate the assistance given by the Historic Environment Service at Cornwall County Council for providing copies of the 1880 and 1907 Ordnance Survey maps.

2.3 Other Cartographical sources

Earlier smaller scale maps have been examined, but are not usually large enough scale to indicate boundary stones although they are particularly good for place-names. These include the Lanhydrock Atlas dated 1696 (Manor of Trehudreth only), Joel Gascoyne's Map of Cornwall dated 1699, Thomas Martyn's map of Cornwall 1745 and the first edition, 1 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1813.⁷

The desktop survey clearly indicated that although a boundary stone may appear on one map, it does not automatically appear on all maps. It appears that sometimes they were missed off later editions, either due to human error, or perhaps if they had fallen over and were no longer visible. Some boundary stones that are marked on the parish tithe maps of 1840s are omitted on all Ordnance Survey maps yet can still be found *in situ* on the moor. Others are sometimes recorded on the Ordnance Survey 1880 map but not on the 1907 edition or vice-versa. Some boundary stones exist on the moor that do not appear on any of the maps examined during the desktop survey. Just under a third of the total boundary stones collated are recorded on the parish tithe maps.

All the boundary stones mentioned in documents and recorded on maps were collated prior to the practical survey and plotted on copies of the 1907 Ordnance Survey map which was used as the 'master' copy for surveying each area of common land.

3. **Methodology for fieldwork**

3.1 Preliminary survey

A preliminary survey of some of the boundary stones took place to assess the requirements for the surveyors and test the ideas stated in the proposal. Many of the granite boundary stones on Blisland Commons are similar in shape and style and often have the same letters or symbols carved on them. Most of the boundary stones are recorded on maps, although not all of them have survived, while as previously stated, some exist on the moor that are not recorded on any maps. Therefore it was proposed for the purposes of this survey, to give all boundary stones and their sites a unique number irrespective to whether they actually still exist

⁷ See the bibliography in the appendices for all map references.

on the ground. These sites and stones were then plotted on master-copy maps (Ordnance Survey 1907 maps) of each area of Common Land.

3.2 Numbering the boundary stones

There is no easy way of numbering these boundary stones, although it was agreed that it would be useful to have some form of identification that would help the surveyors to identify where each stone was positioned. To that end, it was decided to number the boundary stones and their sites by the official Common Land number followed by a number to indicate which stone within this area it was.⁸ For example the boundary stone in the centre of the Trippet Stone circle on Manor Common was numbered 183/3. No. 183 indicates the official county registration number for Manor Common, while the 3 represents the number of the stone on that common. However problems occur when boundary stones divide different areas of common land and decisions have had to be made, as to which piece of common land the stones should be recorded under. Therefore, the numbering scheme adopted is purely to identify the boundary stones that are part of this survey and has no bearing on ownership, legal boundaries or rights.

3.3 Identifying the boundary stones for photography

Because the boundary stones are almost identical pillars of granite, many carved with the same letter or symbol, it was found essential to label each one with its unique number for the photographic record. Only the face carved with letters or a symbol was photographed. The labels placed beside each boundary stone gave the name of the common land, the stone's unique number and the face that was being viewed. For example, Peverall's Cross has a letter **G** carved on its eastern face and is therefore labelled 142/1/E. The 142 indicates that the stone is on Trehudreth Downs; the 1 indicates that it is the first stone recorded on this area of common land, while the photograph is taken viewing the eastern face of the stone. Without these labels it would be very difficult to identify individual stones from a photograph.

⁸ The Common Land registers are held by Cornwall County Council and are accessible to the public by appointment, other local authorities also hold copies. The registers give details of the area covered by the map, such as ownership, acreage, names and addresses of commoners and their common rights to the land.

3.4 Recording the boundary stones

Between the months of March 2005 and February 2006, all the areas of common land were surveyed and approximately two-thirds of the total number of boundary stones identified in the desk-top survey were located. The survey was carried out by the project team, which consisted of professionals and volunteers. Each boundary stone was examined; often the letters or symbols carved on the stones were virtually invisible without close inspection, being masked by lichens or vegetation. Sometimes however, with oblique sunlight, the letters and symbols became clearly visible, while rubbing ones fingers across the stones also helped identify the carving. In most cases mud was rubbed into the incised characters so that they would stand out in the photographs. Early attempts to highlight the symbols in chalk having proved unsuccessful. It should be noted that neither method causes any damage to the stones as the first shower of rain erases all signs of the visit. Each boundary stone was measured, and the alignment of the characters carved on the stones noted on recording sheets.

3.5 Mapping of the boundary stones

Having no access to digital mapping, it was decided to produce hand-drawn maps of each area based on the Ordnance Survey 1907 maps, for the purposes of this report. These allowed for each boundary stone to be clearly identified without the distraction of the unnecessary detail (for our purposes) contained on the OS maps. The position of each stone was accurately recorded with a ten digit national grid reference (NGR) with the aid of GPS (Ground Positioning System) satellite navigation system and plotted on the hand drawn maps of common land in this report. The NGR for each boundary stone is also recorded on the data sheets in the appendices.

4. **Research**

The research into the boundary stones on Blisland Commons focused on the four main questions:

- When were the boundary stones set up?
- Who was responsible for having the boundary stones set up?

- Why were the boundary stones set up?
- What do the letters and symbols on the boundary stones represent?

4.1 Dating of the boundary stones

A variety of different sources were used to help identify when individual boundary stones were set up.

- Large scale maps of the areas of common land indicated which individual boundary stones were existing by a particular date. However there are no large scale maps known of this area before the parish tithe maps of the 1840s, and as previously stated, some boundary stones have been missed off maps, so that their absence does not always mean that they did not exist.
- Documentary evidence also helped to place boundary stones within a chronological time frame, when their existence is recorded in a dated document. For example a Manor of Blisland rental dated 1817 records the existence of a boundary stone with the letter **G** at Temple Water.⁹
- The landowners initials or symbol carved on a stone was related to documentary evidence of when the land was acquired, purchased or sold.
- Finally, each boundary stone was examined, the way they were quarried, cut, drilled and split, their style and the crispness of the carving all help to determine their age.

4.2 Ownership of the Commons

At the start of this project it had been assumed that all the letters or symbols carved on the boundary stones represented individual landowners or manors. To prove this hypothesis some knowledge of the landowners and when they acquired a particular area of common is required. The research concentrated on the following sources:

- Family and manorial records

- Parochial histories
- Biographical accounts
- Church and churchyard memorials
- Family history and genealogy societies

4.3 Reasons for the boundary stones

To understand why these boundary stones were set up required examination of a combination of maps, documents and books from a number of different sources. The research needed to ascertain whether any of the boundary stones related to industrial or mining activity, whether they marked areas of pasture, farms, manors, parish boundaries or other unusual feature.

A major part of the research took place at the following establishments:

- Cornwall Record Office, Truro.
- Truro Reference Library.
- The Royal Institution of Cornwall's Courtney Library, Truro.

⁹ Courtney Library, Royal Institution of Cornwall, Glenacross collection no. MO/1/40.