



WARPATH

CORNWALL CIVIL WAR
BATTLEFIELDS
PROJECT (Director: Pete
Nicholas)

ISSUE 1: DECEMBER 2010



I signed up for this, so what's happening?

THE PROJECT GETS UNDERWAY

Anyone who expressed an interest in this project, including those of us who attended the meeting in The New Inn in Tywardreath in July, may be forgiven if they are unsure if the Project is still going ahead. Well, it most definitely is. Setting up an archaeological investigation, particularly one that is run by an educational charity that prides itself on doing things properly, takes time.

The Project Design is virtually finished, written by qualified archaeologist Jo Higgins, incorporating suggestions made by battlefield archaeologist Natasha Ferguson of Glasgow University. Pete Nicholas, along with Les Dodd, and Tony Lake were busy in August applying for a grant; although we do not yet know if our bid has been successful.

Even though we are not anticipating much in the way of excavation, negotiation with landowners for access is necessary. It is hoped that we can use techniques such as geophysical surveying, fieldwalking and supervised metal detecting, but these activities must be conducted to the highest standards and, obviously, with the agreement of the landowners. This all takes time to set up.

Much of our initial interest has been directed towards the Lostwithiel Campaign of 1644, one that was arguably of national importance, though not yet recognised as such by enough historians. But CAS is equally interested in other campaigns, battles, skirmishes, fortifications, or any physical evidence relating to the Civil War, in Cornwall. Following talks this month it is planned to join with Patricia Wright, who is the Manager, Outreach and Marketing Officer at The Castle in Bude, in carrying out an investigation into the Battle of Stratton of 1643. We hope to be involved in documentary research, geophysical surveying and field walking, hopefully from August 2011. Our findings will be incorporated into a travelling exhibition called *Treasures from the Earth* being run by Royal Cornwall Museum in 2011-2012.

CAS TALKS AND WALKS

Project Director Pete Nicholas introduced the project to CAS members in a lecture in Liskeard on November 19th. Battlefield archaeology is an unusual topic for Cornwall Archaeological Society members but Pete's talk was received with huge enthusiasm. Natasha Ferguson had been booked to give the talk but was unable to make it; however, she is keen to talk to us in the New Year and to visit the battlefield again.

Earlier in the month many of us braved the rain and cold to attend a fascinating walk around Lostwithiel given by Eric Berry and Nick Cahill, both of whom were involved in writing the authoritative *Lostwithiel Characterisation Report*. Their view is that the town appears not to have been devastated by the siege of 1644, or at least that very few signs have been detected. Investigating the impact of the events of 1644 on the town is likely to be one activity that our project members could undertake, through documentary research and observation on the ground. Their superb, exhaustive report is available online at:

www.lostwithielforum.org/documents/area-plan.pdf

BUDE AND STRATTON

If you fancy a bracing walk to help recover from the overindulgence of the festive season, you might well enjoy taking a trip to Bude and following the Stratton Battlefield Trail. It is a circular 3 mile walk (or 4 if you feel more energetic) and is clearly described on an excellent leaflet produced by the North Cornwall Heritage Coast Countryside Service (available from the Bude Visitor Centre at The Castle in Bude).

In your new diaries, it may be worthwhile pencilling in the annual Battle of Stratton Commemoration Weekend due to be held on May 14th and 15th. Events planned include: a battle re-enactment; a Sealed Knot Living Camp; and Music workshops.

THE BATTLEFIELDS TRUST

CAS has become a corporate member of this organisation. Although it is not actively involved in our project at the moment, it is very interested in our progress (as is the Council for British Archaeology). The Battlefield Trust website is <http://www.battlefieldstrust.com/>. You will find maps, photographs and other details of all registered battlefields sites in the UK. At present Cornwall's only registered battlefields are Braddock Down and Stratton but with perseverance let us hope that Lostwithiel joins them in the not-too-distant future.

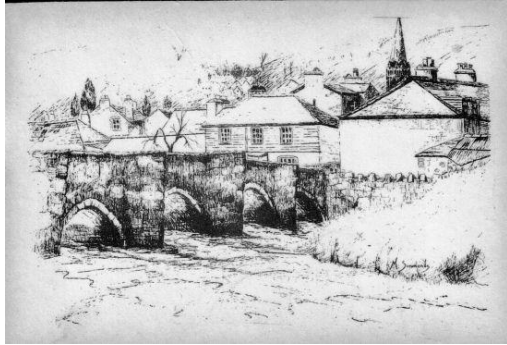


LOST AND FOUND

LOST-one musket loaded and ready to use. Lost somewhere in Saltash between 1642 and 1649. Finder may be rewarded.

FOUND metal workings, barrel and mechanism of musket. Discovered in old well in Lower Fore Street, Saltash. Apply to Balfour Beatty Construction.

Project Director Pete Nicholas has tracked down this item that was apparently discovered by workmen during the construction of the slip road for the Saltash Tunnel and is currently carrying out more research. Hopefully more information will be available in the next issue.



INVESTIGATING THE LOSTWITHIEL CAMPAIGN

In August CAS President Tony Blackman, Pete Nicholas and Roger Smith went to the Historic Environment Service in Truro to discuss the possible appearance of the 17th century landscape.

Discussions were held with landscape archaeologist Pete Herring of English Heritage. One point that he raised was that if armies at the time wanted ease of

movement it would have been wise to avoid enclosed land (on the other hand it could work to their advantage if they sought protection). Therefore by looking for anciently enclosed land it might be possible to at least make hypotheses about where various groups would have been. These might then be matched with any contemporary written accounts that can be found.

One near-contemporary source is the Lanhydrock Atlas, which depicts some of the areas fought over in the summer of 1644. Pete Herring was one of the experts who helped produce a sumptuous reproduction of this beautiful volume. It is published by Cornish Editions, in association with the National Trust, at £149.95. For those interested more information is available at:

http://www.cornwalleditions.co.uk/products/prod_lanhydrock/index.html

Another HES archaeologist, Carl Thorpe, raised a very pertinent question: where were the pikemen in the Lostwithiel Campaign? Pikemen formed a key part of the infantry, and the Cornish were renowned for their skill and effectiveness in using this weapon; yet accounts seen so far make little mention of its use in this campaign. John Andrews and colleagues from the Tywardreath Battlefield Project continue their work in the field, as well as the analysis of finds. Often he has to respond with little notice, since he has to fit in with the landowner's farming schedule, but he has assured us that interesting things are still being found.

One of the advantages of being able to get the Lostwithiel Campaign, or more realistically, part of it, registered as a battlefield would be some protection from inappropriate development. Hitherto many of the accounts have emphasised activity taking place in and around Lostwithiel, as well as on the Castle Dore Ridge. The findings of the Tywardreath Battlefield Project prove that the eastern side of the former Par estuary also saw intense fighting. Some of the documents reproduced in Ede-Borrett's superb book support this, showing clearly that the area from St Blazey Bridge southwards towards Polmear was fought over. After the loss of Fowey, the Parliamentarians used this area to bring in supplies; this meant that the Royalists could not force the siege of Lostwithiel and, as supplies were short for them as well, they sent a considerable force to St Blazey to block the line of supply. By doing so, it might be argued, the Parliamentarians' lack of provisions became more acute and so they were forced to retreat from Lostwithiel. For the defeated men on Castle Dore Ridge, the prospect of a retreat from Tywardreath Bay would also have been a temptation. Whatever the purpose of the fighting in this area, it is clear that it happened but as it isn't a registered battlefield it is not protected from development. For example, the following proposed development is situated just off Tywardreath Hill, a prominent point that may well have had tactical significance at the time: [PA10/05031 | Construction of 16 residential units consisting of 50% affordable dwellings 50% open market dwellings. | Land To Rear Of Polmear Parc Polmear Road Par Cornwall.](#)

The concern is that our knowledge and understanding of these events may be reduced if the area lacks planning status and, therefore, legal protection. Our research could provide a much better idea of the historic importance of such places.



WINTER READING LIST

For those of you who would like to read up on the subject, here are some suggestions:

- Stephen Ede-Borrett *Lostwithiel 1644: the Campaign and the Battles* (The Pike and Shot Society, 2004) ISBN 1-902768-23-1 (The author is interested in and supportive of our project.)
- John Barratt *The Civil War in the South-West* (Pen and Sword Military Books, 2005) ISBN 1-84415-146-8
- Diane Purkiss *The English Civil War; A People's History* (Harper Perennial, 2007) ISBN-10 0-00-715062-8
- Daphne Du Maurier *The King's General* (1946-now published by Virago Modern Classics, 2006) ISBN-10: 1-84408-089-7 (Although dealing with a medieval theme, *The House on the Strand* gives the reader an excellent image of the Par estuary before it silted up.)
- The Federation of Old Cornwall Societies has a wonderful website, including a section of e-books, among which are two works of fiction dealing with the Civil War; these can be seen by visiting: <http://www.oldcornwall.org/Library.htm> The books are:
 - John Carne *Stratton Hill: A Tale of the Civil Wars*, Volumes 1 to 3 (1829)
 - Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch *The Splendid Spur* (1898)
- Don't forget to look at the Cornwall archaeological society's excellent website at: <http://www.cornisharchaeology.org.uk/>
- For an idea of what can be discovered by battlefield archaeology, in this case the Battle of the Little Bighorn (Custer's Last Stand), have a look at <http://www.nps.gov/mwac/libi/index.html>



Before any formal archaeological investigation takes place, two useful activities will be: to get a better knowledge of the areas under consideration, perhaps just by walking around; and to read around the subject. It is intended as a multi-disciplinary, community project, so as soon as we can, we would like to involve those who are interested in taking a more active role.

Pete Nicholas has begun the first process just by visiting some of the places involved in the Lostwithiel Campaign and posing key questions; for example, could the damage to St Nectan's Church tower really have been caused by Parliamentary artillery in Lostwithiel as has generally been thought? It does appear that their cannons could not have reached that far. CAS is considering organising a walk around the Tywardreath area to look at key sites in this important part of the battlefield.

Documentary research is vital if we are to build up an initial picture of the Lostwithiel Campaign and the Battle of Stratton, as well as other important Cornish sites. We are hoping to organise a meeting at the County Record Office as an introduction to the use of documents in our research.

If you wish to get in contact with us please use this link:

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