

Sheet 3

Goonhilly

THE
BRONZE
AGE

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We don't know what the Downs were called in the Bronze Age - the name Dry Tree is more recent and is thought to refer to a gallows that may once have stood near the menhir. There is, however, plenty of archaeological evidence left by the Bronze Age people who lived at the edge of the Downs.

What is a barrow?

Barrows date back to the Early Bronze Age, and were burial and/or ceremonial mounds. They took various forms: *Cruc Draenoc* is a mound of turf, not a hollow structure, and is covered by a layer of orange clay beneath the vegetation. Any burials there would have been cremations.

What are standing stones for?

We cannot be completely sure of their purpose, but they were possibly boundary or way markers. On Goonhilly, the presence of a number of barrows suggests a function within a 'ceremonial' landscape.



Cruc Draenoc Barrow

Overlooked by the imposing modern technology of the Earth Station satellite dishes sits Dry Tree Menhir. It may be small compared to 'Arthur', but it dwarfs the Earth Station in terms of its history: it dates back to the Early Bronze Age (about 2150 to 1500 BC), when it sat at the centre of a ritual landscape of barrows built by the prehistoric settlers of the Downs.

Dry Tree Menhir:

There are no recorded stone circles on The Lizard, and Dry Tree Menhir [H] is one of the few standing stones. It is thanks to Sir Courtenay Vyvyan of Treloarwarren and Colonel Serecold of Rosuic that the menhir is standing at all. It was toppled over on its side for hundreds of years, until in 1916 some soldiers started to break it up to use in resurfacing a road. The two gentlemen fortunately stopped them, and arranged to have the menhir re-erected - although it is a metre shorter than it was originally, thanks to the

soldiers' efforts. The menhir is made of gabbro from the Crousa Downs, over two miles away: the journey to bring it to Goonhilly wouldn't have been quite as spectacular as that for Stonehenge, but still quite an effort.



Dry Tree Menhir

Cruc Draenoc

barrow: Find yourself at the top of *Cruc Draenoc* barrow [H], near to Dry Tree Menhir, and you are standing on the highest point of the Downs: on a good day you can see as far as the St Austell granite uplands. It has been used in mapping by the Ordnance Survey, and the triangulation point is still there.

Cruc Draenoc (meaning 'thorny barrow') is the largest of three barrows associated with the Dry Tree menhir, and one of many barrows on Goonhilly.

Who were the early Bronze Age people of Goonhilly?

While there is much we cannot know, the archaeology of the Downs gives us some insights. In Early Bronze Age Cornwall, people were beginning to move from a nomadic to a more settled lifestyle, building homes in the more fertile land surrounding the Downs and using the Downs themselves for summer grazing when they needed their more fertile pastures for growing crops. The Dry Tree Menhir and barrows across Goonhilly would probably have had a mixture of functions for these people, including for burials and ritual practices.