



August 2021

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Benefits of Vegetation Clearance at Ancient Sites

Welcome to another newsletter from the Penwith Landscape Partnership (PLP)

Now we are three years into the project, we have been able to return year on year to a number of ancient sites with our volunteers to manage vegetation.

It is good management practice on monuments that suffer from heavy bracken growth to cut bracken fronds in the summer over many years. This weakens the root systems (and dreaded rhizomes which damage to buried archaeology) and gradually reduces the amount of plants on site. Sympathetic grazing can help make this a more complete process with cattle typically trampling new growth and eating young shoots. Aside from reducing the root damage to underground heritage,

keeping vegetation managed also allows us to see the sites better. Many sites in Penwith are low to the ground, and often hidden by plant growth for much of the year. As part of the project we are also doing condition checks on some sites and improving the records, so being able to see them is important for that as well.

In addition to this (and to our delight), a much more diverse abundance of flora had begun to appear and re-establish itself now the heavier vegetation is being broken up. The thick overgrowth of Bracken, Bramble and Gorse can completely overshadow other plants so breaking this is allowing some previously overshadowed plants to flourish again. This includes an explosion of bluebells on some of the cleared sites in the spring, particularly at Mulfra Vean settlement.

Aside from Mulfra Vean we have been visiting Bosulow Trehylls settlement on the side of Chûn Downs now for three years and recent species seen include Pignut, Greater Stitchwort, Heath Spotted-orchid, Heath Bedstraw, Common Polypody, Sheeps-bit, Yarrow, Bilberry, Broad Buckler-fern and Royal Fern – as well as an abundance of mosses and lichens, and the common plants that appear everywhere but tend not to be noted!

Historic sites are often havens of biodiversity because of their out of the way locations or undisturbed status. It is exciting to see these sites, in recent years often buried under a sea of fern and Gorse, come to life in this way.



Events

We have the following free events coming up. To learn more and register, go to our Events page:

www.penwithlandscape.com/events

- **21st August 2021 – Weaving the Colours of Penwith family art workshop:** Join artist Sue Kinley for this free workshop where families can create woven pieces of art inspired by Penwith, at the Solomon Browne Memorial Hall, Mousehole, 11am-4pm.

PLP works allow access to Mulfra Vean settlement

Mulfra Vean is a prehistoric settlement, with the remains of at least four courtyard houses and earlier roundhouses, straddling a hedged lane. Enabling public access to the settlement on either side of the lane (a Public Bridleway) has been an aspiration for PLP and CASPN since our very first volunteer sessions back in late summer 2018.



To allow access the courtyard houses in the western side of the site, a section of Cornish hedge has been sensitively rebuilt to accommodate a pedestrian “Penwith” kissing gate adjacent to an existing field gate. On the east side, large granite slabs form steps off the bridleway up to the boundary hedge, and then a granite stile has been built into the hedge. The work was subject to Scheduled Monument Consent, and PLP Archaeologist Laura carried out a Watching Brief over the more sensitive elements of the job. The structures are intended to be entirely in-keeping with the landscape, working with local granite. The hope being that in a year from now, you’d mistake the stones for having been there for hundreds of years.

Thank you to the Olds family for allowing us to work on their land, and for permitting public access to this wonderful archaeological site. And to Pip Morse, for doing such a brilliant job!

We’re looking to get our volunteers back here again very soon - it’s ready for another scything. We have a trail guide to go on the website for this area in the near future, and we’re looking to commission and install a small interpretation panel somewhere at the site itself, visible from the lane.

If you would like to visit this now accessible ancient site, directions can be found on our website at <https://www.penwithlandscape.com/blog/post/access-to-mulfra-vean-settlement>

Who is on the Partnership?

Members of the Penwith Landscape Partnership board are:

Bolitho Estates
Cornwall Ancient Sites Protection Network (CASPN)
Cornwall Archaeological Society
Cornwall AONB
Cornwall Councillors representing four Penwith wards
Cornwall Heritage Trust
Cornwall Wildlife Trust
Farm Cornwall
Farming representatives
National Trust
Save Penwith Moors

Spider Eye Animation
St Aubyn Estates
St Just Town Council
Towednack Parish Council
West Penwith Bridleway Association
Zennor Parish Council

Chaired by Cllr Jim McKenna

Advisors to the board include:

NFU Cornwall, Natural England, Historic England and Cornwall Council Historic Environment Service

If you would like to keep in touch with our work please contact us to sign up to this newsletter.

Penwith Landscape Partnership

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Visit www.penwithlandscape.com, or email PLPinfo@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk. You can also find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.