



Porths and Gigs of the Isles of Scilly

Cornwall Archaeological Unit Report No: 2024R037



Porths and Gigs of the Isles of Scilly

Archaeology of the islands' historic pilot gig boats



Project details	A 'Monument Management Scheme' project with grant funding from Historic England, with match funding from Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL), and a grant from Cornwall Archaeological Society
CAU Project number	147308
CAU Project team	Cathy Parkes (project lead), Mark Bowden (survey) and Tom Goskar (scanning and website).
CAU Report Number	2024R037
Date	February 2025
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Checked and approved by	Andy Jones
Data location at CAU	\\\CAU\Archive\Sites\Scilly\Porths and Gigs of the Isles of Scilly 147308

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Acknowledgements

CAU would like to thank all who helped make the project possible. Historic England (HE), the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) scheme, and Cornwall Archaeological Society (CAS), granted project funding. Permission for fieldwork was given by the Duchy of Cornwall, Tresco Estate, and the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust. Volunteers Layan Harman, Tean Roberts and Ben Sumpter of Scilly and Cornwall worked as trainees on the surveys. Scilly's Community Archaeology Group (CAG) cut scrub in advance of recording work.

Ann Preston-Jones (formerly HE) and Katie Read (for FiPL) supported and advised on the project development and funding applications. The Cornish Pilot Gig Association (CPGA), Five Islands Academy, island gig clubs, St Agnes Island Hall, Scilly Arts and Heritage, Visit Isles of Scilly, and World Pilot Gig Championships (WPGC) organisations made contributions in kind and extended outreach. Brighton & Hove Museums, Kresen Kernow, Isles of Scilly Museum, Institute of Cornish Studies, Morrab Library (Penzance), National Maritime Museum (Greenwich), and University of Exeter, supplied images from their archives. Recent photos of gig rowing are courtesy of Steve Strachan, Jonathan Taylor and Heather Wynn, with thanks also to Jade Colton and Aaron Haile.

Many individuals kindly gave information and help; Patrick Bird, Alison Clough, Rob Davies, Eric Berry, Milly Edwards, Norma Edwards, Chris Evans, Aaron Haile, Tristan Hick, Andrew Hicks, Francis Hicks, Fraser Hicks, Jof Hicks, Johann Hicks, Marigold Hicks, Mike Hicks, Andrew King, Gerald Langdon, Harry Legg, Tamaryn Legg, Nick Jenkins, Richard Jenkins, Stuart Jenkins, Charles Johns, Mary Mac Kay, Graeme Kirkham, Dr Joanna Mattingly, Diana Mompoloki, Joby Newton, Dr Oliver Padel, Adrian Pearce, James Pearce, Richard Pearce, Terry Perkins, Jeremy Phillips, Chris Potterton, Ann Preston-Jones, Debbie Purser, Katharine Sawyer, Lou Simmonds, David Stedeford, Michael Tangye, Jonathan Taylor, Alfred Trehearne, Cathy Tyers, Rachael Utting, Steve Walder, John Williams, and Mandy Williams.

Views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of CAU and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and information currently available.

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Cover image Old gig sheds, at Point, New Grimsby, Tresco: detail from *A Sailor's Wedding Party, 1862*, by James Clarke Hook (1819-1907). Brighton & Hove Museums, reproduced by kind permission. Thanks to Graeme Kirkham for information on the image.

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Abbreviations

BDM	Broad drill mark
CAG	Community Archaeology Group
CAS	Cornwall Archaeological Society
CAU	Cornwall Archaeological Unit
CSHER	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record
CIfA	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
CPGA	Cornish Pilot Gig Association
FiPL	Farming in Protected Landscapes
HE	Historic England
LB	Listed Building
MHW	Mean High Water
NGR	National Grid Reference
OD	Ordnance Datum – height above mean sea level at Newlyn
OS	Ordnance Survey
SM	Scheduled Monument
SV	Standard prefix to NGRs used by OS in references to maps of Scilly
WPCG	World Pilot Gig Championships

Introduction to the 'Porths and Gigs' project

This Cornwall Archaeological Unit (CAU) project records the archaeology of gigs, the sea-going rowing boats once used for pilotage, on the Isles of Scilly (Fig 1). Our aim is to share the results, to contribute to awareness of how the roots of the continuing tradition of gig rowing can be seen in the landscape today. This is a heritage which brings together people from everywhere, on Scilly, in Cornwall and beyond, for rowing training, racing, and other community and charitable events.

The Isles of Scilly lie in a strategic position in historic seaways, with Cornwall's Land's End around 30 miles distant to the east. The five islands inhabited today, and the sixth main island of Samson, are surrounded by a dozen islets with traces of use by people in the past, and scores of rocks and ledges (frontispiece). Between them are shallow waters, where sandy flats and bars are exposed at low tide, as well as deeper channels.

This historic maritime landscape here is varied and beautiful. It has a highly distinctive character, with many ancient monuments, and traditional buildings of local types, made of the islands' granite. There are archaeological remains also in and around the central sea, where a lost central marshy land was gradually submerged in later prehistoric times, as found by the scientific investigations of the Lyonesse Project (Charman *et al* 2016).

In adverse weather and sea states, Scilly could be exceptionally hazardous for shipping in the past. Among its many archaeological sites, still visible in the landscape, are the ruined sheds of the pilot gigs. These boats were designed to take pilots out to board and guide ships, in the days of sail and steam, in competition with other pilot crews.

Gigs are made to be fast, manoeuvrable, and stable in rough conditions. In the past they could be fitted for sailing, although rowing at speed was their primary purpose. They were based on the islands' porths (or pars, the Scillonian form of this word). The word, in the Cornish language, means 'cove, harbour, gateway' (Padel 1985, 190-192).

The bases for pilotage were built close to the shore, to facilitate rapid launching and recovery of the boats by their crews, numbering seven people including the cox'n. At these sites there is archaeology of sheds, slipways, and ways lined with massive boulders for the gigs to pass through the inter-tidal rocks, called drangs. (This is the Cornish dialect term for them used on Bryher.) These complexes can be 200 years old, or older still. Many elements of them are gradually being buried by beach material, shifted or cut away by wave action, or submerged by sea-level rise.

Pilotage and salvage ran on as important strands of livelihoods into the 20th century, and gigs were used in rescues long after specialised lifeboats were introduced. Knowledge has been passed on over generations, and historic boats have been restored. Published histories, drawing on local knowledge, help share stories of the boats. The Cornish Pilot Gig Association (CPGA) project *Pulling Together the Past* brings together old photographs and memories particularly of the growth of racing as a sport in the region.

The Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record (CSHER) has previously recorded a dozen shed sites on the islands. CAU have made plans of sheds at Lower Town, St Martin's (Ratcliffe and Sharpe 1990, 69 and 70), and Peraskin, St Agnes (Ratcliffe 1991, 135). Six of sites (or parts of them) are Scheduled Monuments (SMs). Several of the SMs are now on Historic England's Register of Heritage at Risk, due to sea level-rise and erosion.

The project has investigated the sites, linked them with local knowledge, and created plans and virtual 3D models you can spin and zoom. The report is in four parts. The first part mirrors the content of a project website [Porths and Gigs of the Isles of Scilly](#), and the other parts expand on this, so that the report structure comprises –

- **1** Presenting the results of the fieldwork, also available on the project website. This part includes screenshots of the website's inter-active virtual 3D models;
- **2** Looking at more gig archaeology, in two contrasting places – the busy Hugh Town on St Mary's, and the uninhabited island of Samson;
- **3** Rapidly exploring other gig-related sites, around the coasts of the islands; and
- **4** Interpreting findings – including the potential for more discoveries.

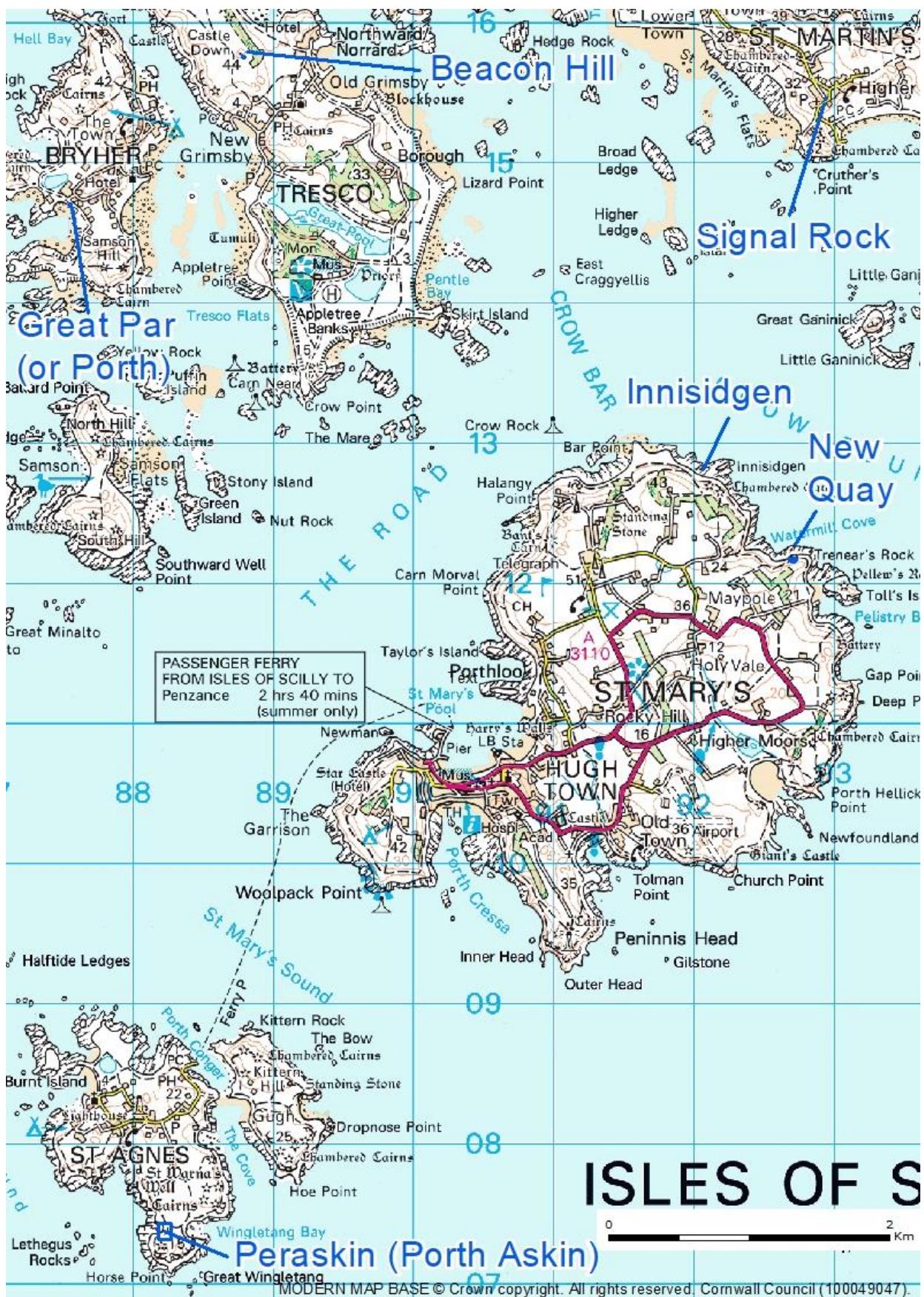


Fig 1 Map of Scilly, showing locations of main sites surveyed and scanned in the Porths and Gigs project (the pilot gig shed sites are mapped in more detail in Figures 110-116).

1 Results of the site surveys and scanning

Introduction to the project fieldwork

Welcome to this exploration of the pilot gig archaeology of Scilly, presenting results of survey and scanning work at sites on each of the main islands (Fig 1). The fieldwork was carried out in 2024, taking in phases of extreme low tides in order to record features usually submerged by the sea.

On Scilly, the seagoing rowing gig boats, 32 feet long, built of fine elm planks for strength and lightness, gained an outstanding local importance, and supported the maritime traffic of the UK. Gigs took pilots to ships on the hazardous approaches, saved lives and goods from wrecks, and served for work ranging from farming to lighthouse tendering (Figs 2 and 3). Eight historic gigs are preserved here, and five of these are still racing.

Each of Scilly's five main islands has traces of old gig sheds, some newly re-discovered. The earliest sites are potentially 17th century. This archaeology reflects the organisation of pilotage, and relates to astonishing feats of rowing, including in horrific gale conditions, that saved ships, and lives. Clues from historic maps, and ruins, point to the sites of approximately 90 gig sheds (counting the halves of double sheds separately), with visible archaeology remaining at half of these!

Gig shed archaeology

Gig sheds were maintained through the earlier 20th century, and some were newly built in that period using modern materials while keeping the traditional form. Photographs were taken more frequently on Scilly from c1860 onwards (Martin 2014). Some show gig sheds, mostly at a distance. But by the time of wider access to photography around the mid-20th century, the sheds, like the gigs, were falling out of use. Some are now restored (Figs 5 and 6), but others were dismantled, buried in sand or eroded by the sea.

However, islanders passed on memories and log-books of the sheds and their gigs. This has been crucial to knowledge of the gigs, especially as they were not officially registered as such. The surveyors of the detailed 25-inch scale maps of 1887-1888 and 1906 recorded all sheds they found at those times, indicating by shading whether they were roofed or ruined. Archaeological remains provide evidence of those sites, and more – including early gig sheds, disused long before those first detailed OS maps.

To help share this heritage, before more is lost to the sea, our project team, with volunteers from Scilly and Cornwall, made scaled plans (Figs 7 and 8) and 3D models (Fig 9). We combined the results with evidence from old maps, fieldwork, previous archaeological work, and local knowledge kindly contributed by islanders (Figs 10-13).

Part 1 of the report, below, presents the models and surveys created through the fieldwork at seven main locations, together with interpretations and illustrations of the context and meanings of the sites.

This Part 1 is structured in sequence moving clockwise around the islands, in parallel with the project website. The website includes the interactive 3D models that are presented here in the form of screenshots. The sites in the sequence of results are;

- **Porthloo, St Mary's;** Archaeology of the building of pilot gigs
- **Innisidgen, St Mary's;** A lost early gig shed, and a kelp-harvesting site
- **New Quay, St Mary's;** 'Boat-shaped' sheds, and their monumental route to the sea
- **Peraskin (Porth Askin), St Agnes;** A whole base for pilotage, on an outlying porth
- **Great Par, Bryher;** Sheds of renowned gigs, worked by rival groups of pilots
- **Beacon Hill, Tresco;** Hilltop platform that once had a mast for pilots to signal to ships
- **Signal Rock, St Martin's;** Ancient lookout and meeting place, on a rock outcrop.



Fig 2 A gig attends the Horsa after she struck in a gale in 1893 at Bread-and-Cheese Cove, St Martin's. (Photograph by Gibson © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.)

The Daymark on St Martin's Head, seen above the ship, was built in the 1680s, with St Agnes' lighthouse, to mark the approaches to Scilly from east and west. Both structures are the earliest of their kind to survive in the UK, evoking the natural hazards of the islands that made the services of the pilot gig crews vital to navigation in the past.



Fig 3 Rare close-up view of a gig at the wreck of steamer King Cadwallon on the Hard Lewis rocks off St Martin's in 1906. (Photograph by Gibson, © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.)



Fig 4 The 1879 gig Czar pulled by a Tresco & Bryher Gig Rowing Club womens' crew, winners of Scilly's domestic racing season in 2023 and 2024 (thanks to Aaron Haile and Jonathan Taylor).

Czar's original shed, on Great Porth, Bryher, is one of the sites surveyed and scanned as part of the Porths and Gigs project, producing the results in Part 1.5 and on the website.



Fig 5 Restored shed that formerly housed the 1886 gig Sussex, near the Bar on Bryher. The shed is restored for keeping gigs (it houses Alfie Jenkins, built in 2020) with an extension used for a display on gig heritage. Red tiles, from Bridgwater in Somerset (see Fig 100) became part of the islands' traditions, in use for various buildings before 1800.



Fig 6 Shed of the Golden Eagle of 1870 at Great Porth, Bryher, restored as a studio.

Gigs could be sold between islands, and the Bonnet of 1830, originally at St Martin's, was later kept in the roof beams here above Eagle (Richard Pearce, pers. comm.).



Fig 7 Mark Bowden (left), leading specialist in archaeological survey (and great-great-great nephew of a Cornishman tried and acquitted for firing on an exciseman who was pursuing smugglers!) prepares a 'plane table' to plan the sheds at New Quay, St Mary's, with volunteer Ben Sumpter.



Fig 8 Survey under way at Peraksin, St Agnes. Scillonian volunteer trainee Teän Roberts, holding the staff, is at the mouth of the gig trackways through the rocks.

Mark Bowden (just visible high up the beach, in line with the drang) is at the plane table, sighting to the staff with a distance-measuring alidade to construct the hand-drawn plan. A pilot crew returning to this point at low tide, perhaps after rowing far out to the west, would have to carry or drag their gig from here to sheds on the shore beyond Mark.



Fig 9 Scanning archaeologist Tom Goskar of Penzance photographs a rib of the Bonnet at Porthloo Boatyard to create a 3D model; thanks to boatbuilder Andrew Hicks.



Fig 10 Cathy Parkes, CAU project lead (also a Roseland gig rower) at the site of a gig shed, scoured out by the sea, below the hotel at Lower Town, St Martin's.

The long side walls extend back from the foreground. The site was drawn 40 years ago by Michael Tangye, pioneering recorder of coastal remains on Scilly (see Fig 104).



Fig 11 Richard Jenkins of Bryher at Rapid's Drang, at Kitchen Porth, one of the ways made and used by his family and others for gigs or punts to pass through inter-tidal rocks. This drang served the pilot cutter Rapid (information thanks to Mr Jenkins).

Rapid carried away to St Mary's, after their recovery on Bryher, two men saved from the fatal wreck of the Delaware by the crew of the gig Albion in 1871 (see further Part 1.5). One of the rocks seen here on the right (south) side of the drang has a wedge splitting mark in its base, indicating it was worked c1600-1800.



Fig 12 Gig sheds on Lower Town Par, St Martin's in a photograph of 1930 preserved on St Martin's. (Reproduced thanks to Michael Tangye, who copied it there 50 years later courtesy of Mrs P. Howell.)

Features include the large-mesh nets of rope made to help secure the thatch roofs, and stone-splitting marks on the post to the left (potentially of c1800, although the post could well have been re-used so this does not necessarily date the building of the shed).



Fig 13 View looking west across Lower Town St Martin's from the decades around 1900, showing the row of gig sheds on the par (middle ground, left), south of the rocky Bab's Carn (now largely overgrown). The modern hotel site is north of the carn.

The landing here, like Lower Town itself, has been used from medieval times. The sites of the sheds, and of a small early harbour below, are now deep in sand (see Fig 107).

1.1 Porthloo, St Mary's; Archaeology of the building of pilot gigs

The traditional design of gigs, evolved in Scilly and Cornwall, was particularly suited to running into a head sea, helping pilots reach sailing ships driven on the prevailing westerly winds (Milly Edwards, pers. comm.). It was developed further by Cornish master builder William Peters in the early 19th century at Polvarth, St Mawes. Peters made all the historic gigs now preserved on Scilly, most of which were taken to Newquay and restored c1954 (Gillis 1978). (Apart from *Klondyke*, below.) Peters built many more gigs formerly kept on the islands too. He also supplied to Newquay in 1838 the *Treffry*, whose lines are used as the model for racing gigs today (Harris 1994, 182) (Fig 14).

Pilot gigs were also built on St Mary's; in addition to sailing ships, dozens of which were commissioned and operated by owners on Scilly in trading ventures around the world in the mid-19th century. One shipyard, taken on in 1875 by William Gluyas (1841-1923) from his uncle William Mumford, lay above Town Beach opposite his uncle's Lyonesse House on Lower Strand (Larn and Banfield 2013, 10-12).

Traces of Gluyas' yard remain at Holgates (named after a later hotel that formerly stood here) where gigs are stored annually for the racing championships. An 1862 map shows the wall against an alley, at the town end of Holgates Green, that once formed one side of shed in the yard (Fig 15). Gluyas built a gig in 1877, named *Klondyke* in 1897, conserved at the Isles of Scilly Museum (Jenkins 1975, 64) (Fig 16). The Museum collection is currently in storage; however, plans to restore and display *Klondyke* as part of a renewed museum and cultural centre are now in development.

Klondyke was used for lighthouse tendering work, based on St Agnes. Sheds where she was kept at different times survive as walled platforms, at Porth Conger. They lie either side of the road, downhill from the present *Shah* shed (thanks to Marigold Hicks for information) (Fig 17).

More recently, Tom Chudleigh used a converted glasshouse in a yard behind the Strand, on Wellcross Lane, to build racing gigs for Scilly (Fig 18) (Johns and Sawyer 2015). Gigs made there include St Mary's *Serica* (1967) – using the lines of the old gig *Bonnet*, as noted by Alfred Jenkins – and St Martin's *Dolphin* (1969).

At St Mary's present boatyard, at Porthloo (locally pronounced 'Porth Low'), parts of old gigs replaced during repair work in the past are kept by Andrew Hicks (Fig 19). Thanks to Andrew, a selection of these parts, and other pieces used in traditional gig building, was included in the *Porths and Gigs* scanning and modelling work (Fig 9).

Parts from pilot gigs were preserved by other builders too, notably Ralph Bird of Devoran. St Agnes' new racing gig, *Cetawayo*, has laminated wood conserved from a different old gig, recorded by name, fitted in each section (builder Patrick Bird, pers. comm.). The archaeology of Peraskin or Porth Askin on St Agnes is associated with the story of Cetewayo, King of the Zulu nation in the later 19th century (Part 1.5).

An outstanding recent discovery, at St Agnes, is part of a gig found re-used as panelling inside a house (thanks to Harry and Tamaryn Legg). Harry has identified the piece as probably part of the gig *Bee*, apparently based on St Agnes by 1841 when she went out to the fatal wreck of the *Thames* on the Western Rocks (Jenkins 1975, 56). The early elm planking and old paint of the piece have great archaeological potential (Fig 20). It may be that more remains of this kind survive, in other contexts, since re-use and adaptation of material is a strong island tradition.

Archaeology could reveal more about gigs and their building. Their age could be investigated by dendro-chronology (tree-ring pattern dating) or by oxygen isotope analysis (Cathy Tyers, Historic England, pers. comm.). Elm timber cut for boatbuilding is sometimes discovered buried in mud, in the Fal estuary around St Mawes. Gig builders, like the Peters family, would season it the creeks for 4 or 5 years. On Scilly, in the age of pilotage, comparable timber had to be imported rather than cut (Fig 21). Here, however, gigs themselves could survive buried in blown sand. As old maps show, sites of many gig sheds now lie under dunes, like those in a long row at Periglis, St Agnes.

The virtual 3D models here were made courtesy of Andrew Hicks of Porthloo boatyard.

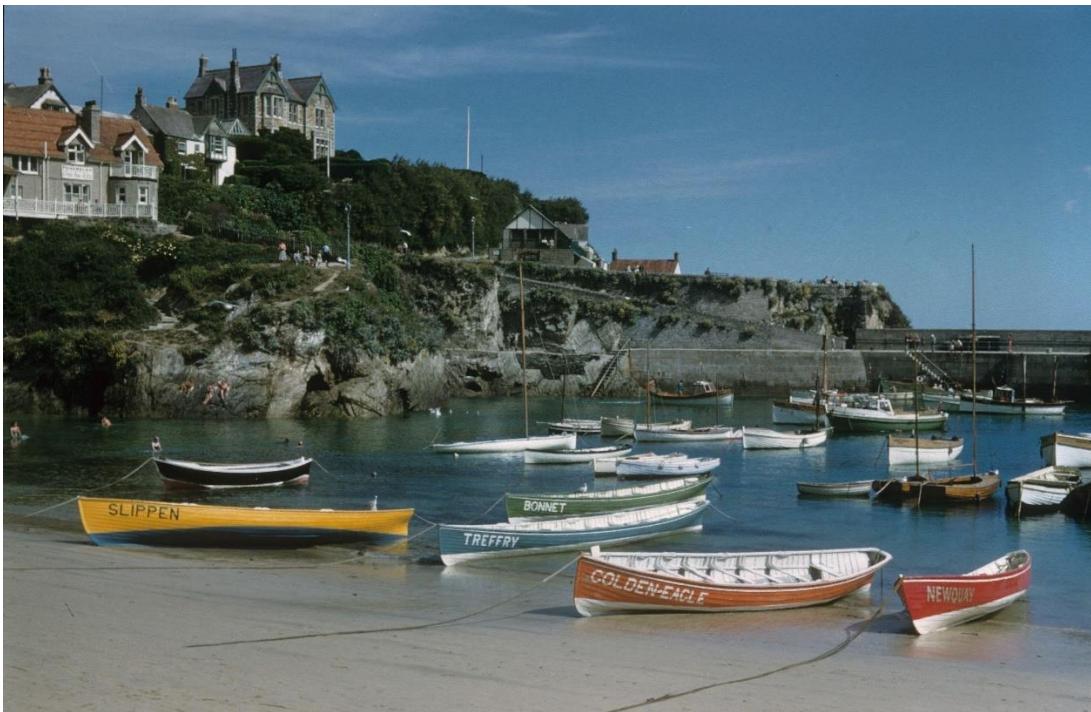


Fig 14 Historic gigs taken from Scilly to Cornwall; ICS12/2280, Gigs, Newquay Harbour, 1956. (© Charles Woolf Slide Collection, University of Exeter Penryn Campus.)

Slippen and Bonnet were originally based at St Martin's. Golden Eagle was housed at Great Porth, Bryher, and Bonnet was later kept in the beams of the Eagle's shed.

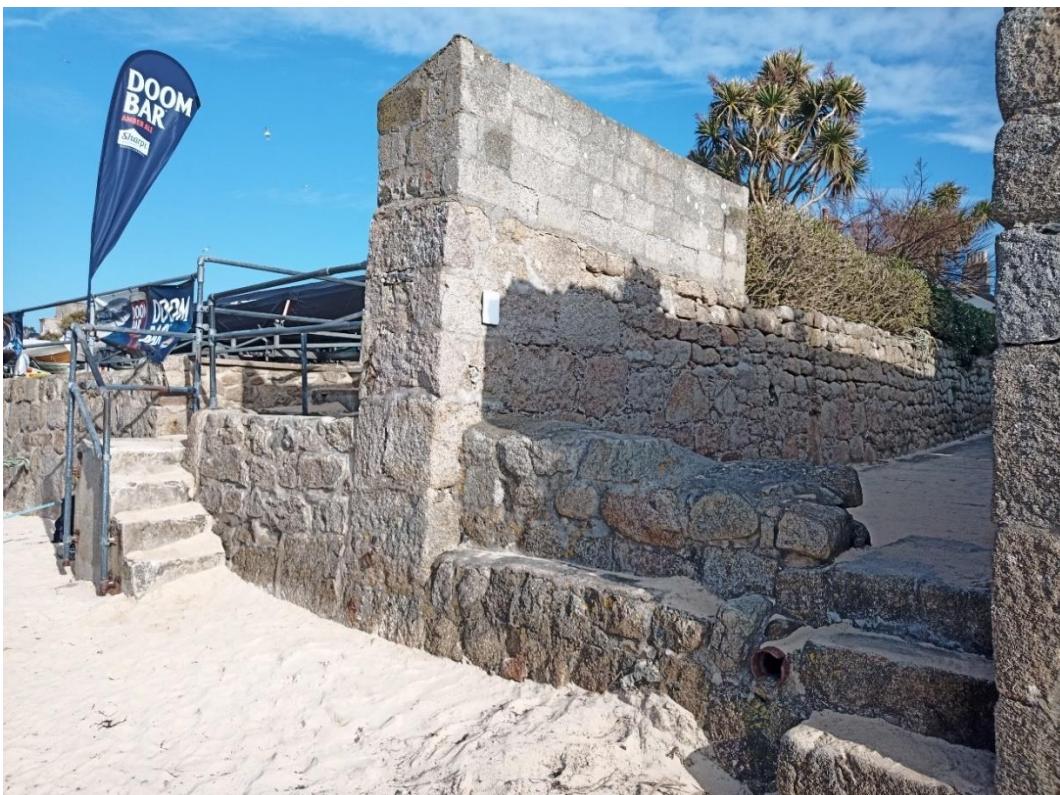


Fig 15 Edge of the old Gluyas yard, now part of Holgates Green. The wall against the alley with concrete top, and the later steps with modern rails, mark where the two long sides of one of boatyard's sheds ran back to end at the Strand in Gluyas' day.



Fig 16 The 1877 gig Klondyke in Scilly's old Museum (now closed). Her sails were from Czar (Jenkins 1975, 64). Czar is seen at work under sail and oars in Figure 58.



Fig 17 Sites of sheds used at different times for the Klondyke, Porth Conger, St Agnes. The shed sites, either side of the road, are now roofless walled platforms, near the Turk's Head pub (converted from an old coastguard station with its own slipway). The shed above, rebuilt in the old style on an earlier shed site, is now used for the gig Shah.



Fig 18 Yard on Wellcross Lane where Tom Chudleigh built racing gigs in the 1960s.

Below, across the Strand, is the Rechabite slip used by earlier boatyards. North of the slip, traces in the sea wall mark the site of a shed where the gig Leo was kept (Fig 90).



Fig 19 Andrew Hicks with parts from old repairs to the Czar - a knee that held the no. 1 thwart, and a piece with thole pin holes from under the gunwale at one of the rowing positions.



Fig 20 Harry Legg with the part of a gig he discovered and identified as the Bee built in 1838, which had been re-used as panelling at St Agnes.



Fig 21 Elm from St Mary's Holy Vale, at Porthloo boatyard; elm was once prolific on the Roseland but having been lost to disease there it is now more characteristic of Scilly.

3D models; Archaeology of the building of pilot gigs

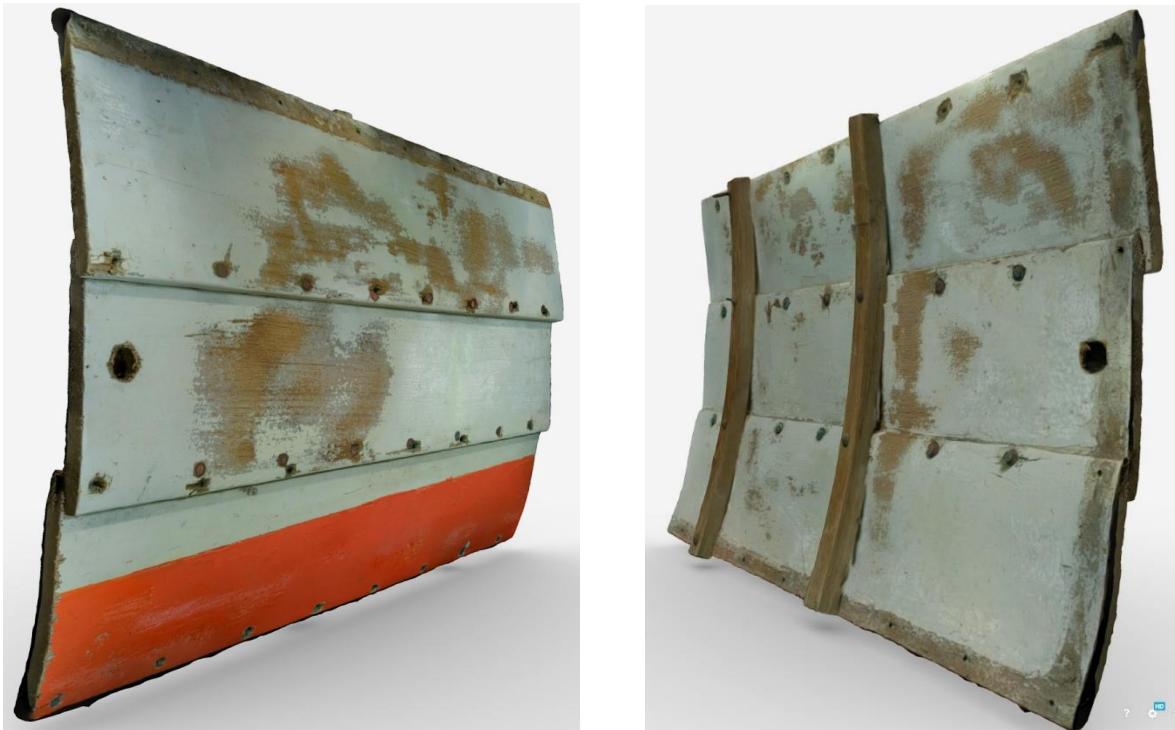


Fig 22 Sample of nailing from the building of Nornour in 1971 by Gerald Pearne of Looe.

This piece demonstrates the gigs' clinker construction with overlapping planks (Fig 22). It shows the stages of fastening planks with copper nails or 'rivets'. Nails are secured inside by 'roves' (copper washers), by trimming and driving them down over the roves. Planks are made of narrow-leaf elm, making them both durable and flexible, strong and light. They are only $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick! This allowed gigs to be carried when needed – it could be a 100m haul up from the sea to the gig sheds at low water, as at New Quay.

Nornour was kept at Pendrathen, before moving to the new, traditional style sheds at Porth Mellon. Pendrathen was used for pilotage, and transport between the islands, from c1759. Old gigs kept there included *Boot*, *Chance*, *Railway*, and *Whaler*, and the *Bee* that ended up on St Agnes (see Site 18 in Part 3 for references). Among the gig sheds is 'Norman's Shed', rebuilt slightly shorter leaving part of the old wall behind it (Fig 23).



Fig 23 Old gig shed with original inner end uncovered, at Pendrathen. Sheds were often partly re-roofed like this for smaller boats in the past, as the 1887-1906 maps show.



Fig 24 Rib of the Bonnet built by Peters of St Mawes for St Martin's in 1830, probably dating from before the gig went to Cornwall c1954 (Andrew Hicks, pers comm.).

Ribs were traditionally of oak, so in the bow they could be as thin as this one, 1/2 by 3/8 inch (Fig 24). Layers of paint indicate long use; pilot gigs could be black, or coloured.

Bonnet was kept at Par Beach (Higher Town Bay), St Martin's, near the modern old-style sheds there. She moved to Tresco, then Bryher, where she was kept at Great Porth in the roof of the *Golden Eagle* shed, then back to Tresco (Richard Jenkins, pers. comm.).

Bonnet was named in tribute to an islander who waved her bonnet to the gig for luck on Cruther's (Gullis) Hill above Par Beach (Stuart Jenkins, pers. comm.) Signalling by waving a jacket or hat was called 'swaysing', as recorded at the time of the *Delaware* wreck in 1871. The crew of the *Albion* of Bryher swayed from North Hill, Samson, for a second gig to pull over to help save men they'd rescued from a raging sea by hauling their gig all across Samson to reach them. *Albion*'s shed was also in Great Porth (Part 1.5)



Fig 25 Board for building gigs based on the Treffry of 1838, 32' long and 4'10" beam.

This board was used by Peter Martin to build gigs including *Taran* for Mount's Bay (1999) and *Morlader* for Penryn (2001) (Fig 25). The board allows 'moulds' of plywood to be held at stations along the gig's keel with the stem and transom (bow and stern) timbers rising at its ends. Planks are secured to the profile made by these formers, and ribs, gunwales and thwarts are fixed.

Besides the skill of William Peters, the success of the St Mawes yard that produced the *Treffry* design may reflect its siting, near Falmouth with its Royal Mail packet and other shipping requiring gigs, and its location within a day's sail from Scilly.

Peters was also well-supplied with elm, widespread on the Roseland before elm disease. Mature elm can still be seen on Scilly, not struck by the disease. The islands, anciently wooded as shown by pollen analysis, had few trees by Victorian times and shipyards here imported timber, much of it from Redbridge, Southampton (Spry 1800, 14).



Fig 26 Steering yoke of Emma Louise built by Peter Martin for St Mary's in 2004.

The *Emma Louise* was named after the daughter of artist John Heywood who donated the gig (thanks to Andrew King for information). In the past, new gigs were often given names of ships for which the pilots had provided salvage or rescue work, earning fees that paid for the gig. *Golden Eagle* refers to the gold dollars paid to Bryher pilots for saving the crew of the American ship *Award* in 1861 (Jenkins 1975, 62).

A yoke from the gig shows the traditional steering apparatus (Fig 26). Ropes fixed to the holes allowed the cox to hold them and steer while moving to different positions (as seen in Fig 3) and to turn the gig rapidly. Yokes were so called as they resemble the neck yokes of the pairs of oxen used for ploughing in Cornwall and Scilly into the 18th century.

Rope was made on Scilly when shipbuilding here was at its height, c1840-1870 (Larn and Banfield 2013, 19). The ropewalk was a long structure at Porthloo, now partly lying open beside a lane, and partly restored as sheds (Fig 27). Straw was woven previously for various purposes including holding the thatch used to roof gig sheds as well as houses. Rope was also shipped in, and wherever possible it was salvaged (by gig) from wrecks.



Fig 27 Ropewalk of c1840 at Porthloo, running along the level, part restored as sheds.

1.2 Innisidgen, St Mary's – A lost early gig shed, and a kelp-harvesting site

Gigs have been used for around 400 years on Scilly. An East Indiaman, *Royal Oak*, struck on the Bishop and Clerk rocks in 1665 (Cummings 2016, 41-42, on the Nautical Archaeology Society website). Ships' timbers, and spices from the cargo, driven in on beaches, alerted Scillonians to the wreck. They 'hastened boats' there and rescued survivors, wounded and starving, from a rock, possibly the Daisy in the Western Rocks.

Dr Joanna Mattingly has found an image of gigs from four centuries ago (Fig 28), on a map of church lands at St Just in Roseland, Cornwall. This is the parish where many of the island's gigs were built by Peters at Polvarth, St Mawes, 2 centuries later. The gigs depicted in 1620 have 7 or 8 oars (shown, with artistic licence, on one side of the boat).

Gigs were later limited to 6 oars, to make it harder for them to evade pursuit by Customs cutters. Masters of gigs on Scilly petitioned against a restriction to only four oars in 1829 (see further Site 16 in Part 3). Fifty years after that, in 1879, Peters built the *Czar*, originally fitted for 7 oars, for pilots on Bryher (Jenkins 1975, 58) (Part 1.5).

Besides gig sheds, the large-scale OS maps of 1887-1888 also plotted clearings that ran across many rockier porths (except on Tresco, this island being surrounded by sandy beaches apart from at its north end which has higher cliffs). These features are revealed at low tides, often strewn with shifting stones and festooned in seaweed.

Islanders preserve traditions of these inter-tidal ways (Richard Jenkins, pers comm). Kelp was carried up some, to be dried and burnt in stone-lined pits; the residue was exported for use in industry, from c1684 to the early 1800s (Over 1987). After kelping declined, its ways were used to gather seaweed for manuring, appearing in early photographs.

Some ways ran directly to sea, for launch and recovery of gigs and smaller punts. The terms recorded for these vary between the islands. They include 'lake', on St Mary's, 'trackway' on St Agnes, and 'drang' on Bryher (thanks to John Williams, Jof Hicks and Richard Jenkins for information). Drang is also used in Scilly and Cornwall to mean natural channels between rocks on shores, and, by extension, to mean alleys in some fishing villages such as Mousehole. The Bryher term drang is generally used in this report (as in the summary of sites, Part 3), being a local dialect word perhaps earlier in origin.

The *Porths and Gigs* project has searched shores immediately above the drangs, to investigate the possibility that they point to remains of early gig sheds, too ruined to be plotted as such by the OS in 1887-1888, but still surviving as low earthworks today.

A network of ways on the shore at Innisidgen (Fig 29) was noted previously by CAU (Ratcliffe and Sharpe 1990, 60). As shown by the *Porths and Gigs* plans, the route second from the east in the network is a drang, going straight to sea from the base of the slipway that gives access to the beach, and it points to a ruined gig shed site above the slip (within an existing Scheduled area) (Figs 30-32).

This is a sloping hollow, gig sized, with low banks where its walls stood, and fallen slabs probably from its doorway in front. It could be one of the earliest gig sheds still visible and undisturbed. The walling may have fallen in, rather than being dismantled, making the interior less regular in plan, seemingly well before 1887 as the OS did not see it. Innisidgen is a strategic site, facing the east approach to Scilly and the off-islands.

The network of ways on the shore, mapped in 1887, can be seen to have been developed for kelping and seaweed gathering, from the primary drang aligned on the gig shed. Branches run along the shore as well as to sea, and there are enlarged nodes at mid-tide mark (Figs 29 and 31). As Mark Bowden suggests, the enlarged bays may have held kelp ready to be hauled up for drying and burning. If this network dates from the height of kelping, before c1800, the gig shed with its slipway could be 18th century or earlier.

Another early gig shed site on St Mary's, indicated by a drang, lies south of Porth Hellick. The site is hard to access on the overgrown steep coastal slope; possibly it had an access path eroded by the sea. A hollow above the end of the drang has the width of a gig shed, but is shorter, possibly truncated by the sea (Fig 33). There may be more long-lost gig shed sites to find; some remains buried in sand could be exposed by wind or erosion.



Fig 28 Depiction of a gig on the creek by St Just in Roseland churchyard in 1620.
(Kresen Kernow, Redruth: ref. ACS ARD/TER/637, reproduced with kind permission.)



Fig 29 Ways through inter-tidal boulders, Innisidgen. That on the left is interpreted as a drang, running straight to sea from the slipway below a gig shed-type earthwork.

The way to the right has an expanded 'elbow' shape. This seems to be one of several branches made from the drang in order to land kelp and load and carry it on pack animals.



Fig 30 Hollow flanked by banks c10m or 32' long, resembling an early shed, Innisidgen. Across the coast path, a slip on the same line slants down to the shore (beside the tree).

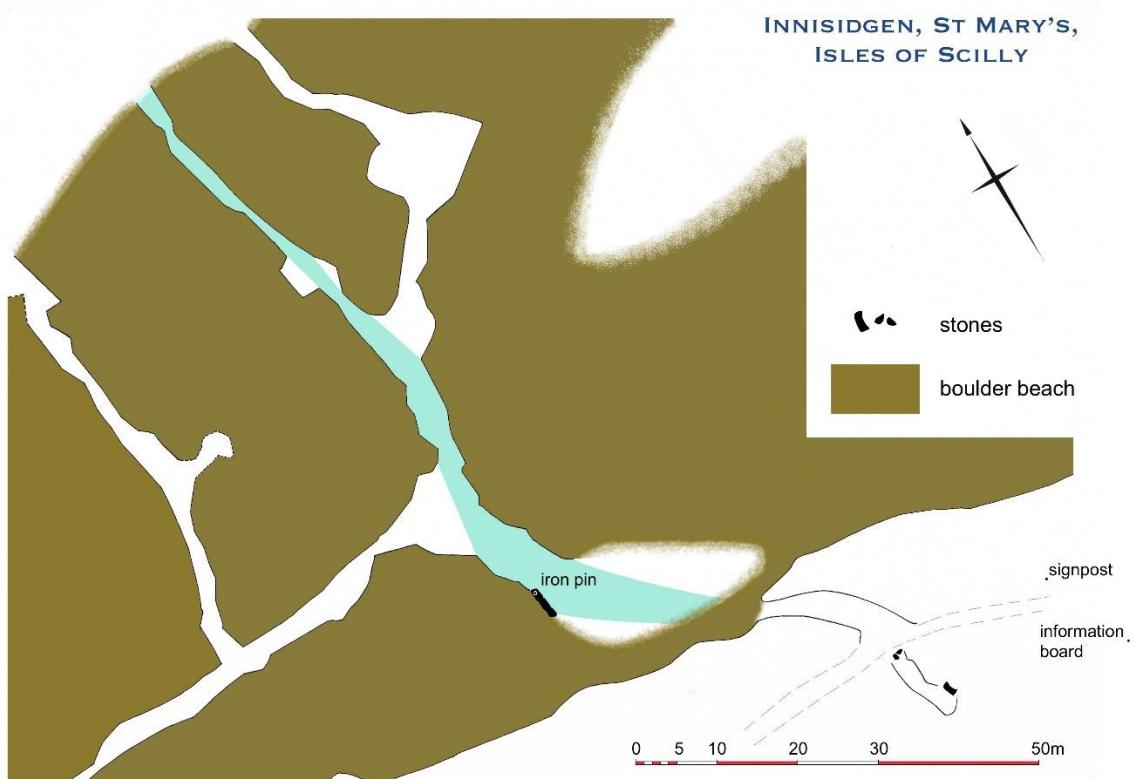


Fig 31 Plan of Innisidgen. The gig shed with its slipway, lower right, was served by a drang 100m long (shaded in blue), extended by branches for kelping to either side. (Nearby signs are marked on the plan to help locate the site in the bracken in summer.)

Innisidgen, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly

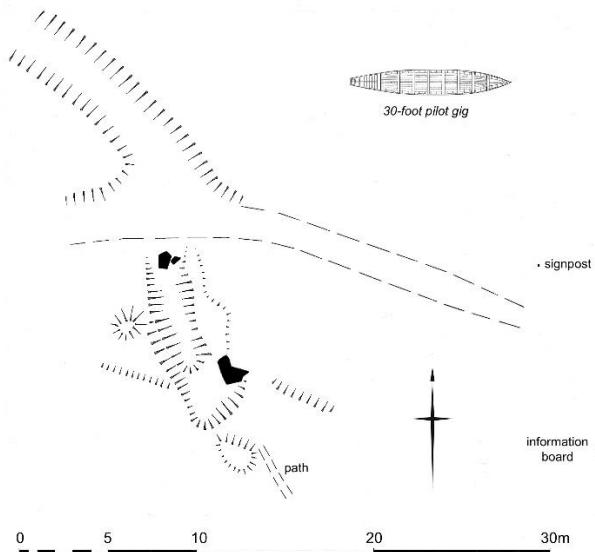


Fig 32 Plan of probable gig shed (with stones shaded in) above the slip at Innsidgen.

Above the shed is the end of a path, mapped in part in 1792 and in 1887, connecting this site with the Helvear area, where the 1792 map shows houses existing today, and others.

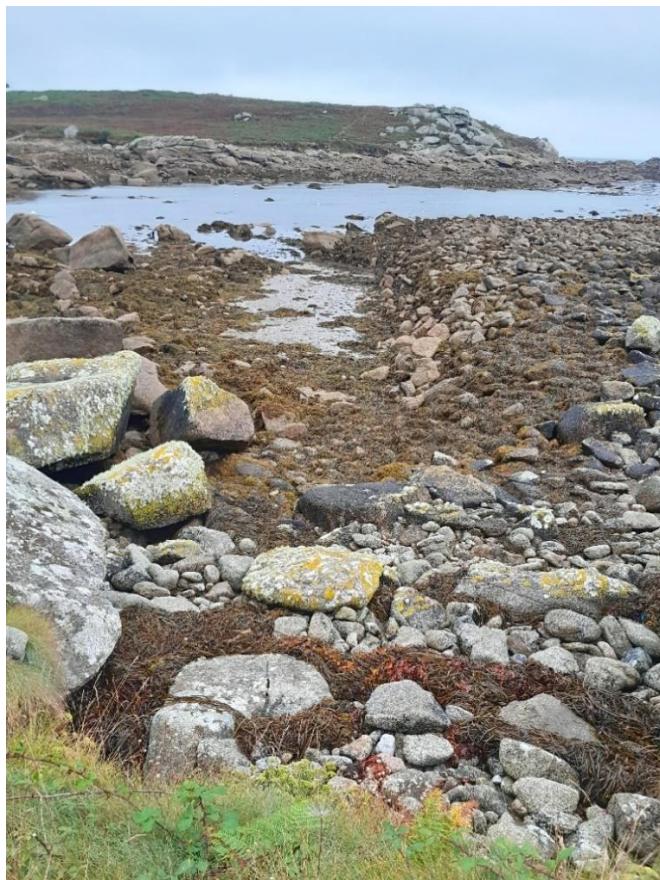


Fig 33 Drang at Porth Hellick, seen from a hollow above it potentially a ruined gig shed. In the background, left, is the re-used gig shed north of the par, with its drang (Fig 97).

1.3 New Quay, St Mary's – 'Boat-shaped' sheds, and their monumental route to the sea

New Quay, facing the eastern approach to Scilly, has been used by gigs for some 300 years, or more. The site is named on a relatively detailed early chart of the islands made in 1735. It has a well-preserved complex of half a dozen gig sheds and several smaller boathouses. Part of the complex lies within a larger Scheduled Monument area.

The sheds are early in style. Their stonework is barely coursed, and the walls bulge in places, yet they are neat and substantial. The long sides curve out near their centres, making the sheds slightly boat-shaped in plan (Figs 34 and 35). Sheds have imposing doorways. Bulky upright slabs form their openings, to either side, and these have slanting front faces that project forwards as they rise, with eye-catching effect (Fig 35).

In contrast, the small, high gable end windows, more irregular and made of smaller slabs, are meant to give ventilation and a bit of light, rather than to be seen (Fig 36). The floors are sloping, dug in only as much as necessary to fit the sheds into the coastal slope. A few sheds seem to have rough paving on their floors, and in some, the inner end walls incorporate outcropping bedrock.

A monumental drang was made here, for the gigs to pass through a tidal bank of boulders or 'brow' as these are called on Scilly (Fig 37). Locally it was called the 'Lake' or 'Creek' (John Williams, pers. comm.) The Lake is a remarkable 80m long, and wide enough in places for two gigs to pass. Gigs would seem to have been carried along it, not dragged, as the base is bedrock rather than sand (Fraser Hicks, pers. comm.). Original parts of the facing to its sides have an early character, like the gig sheds it served, with stones 'pitched' or set vertically like those forming Scilly's oldest piers (Fig 38).

As the gigs here could only work out of the Lake, their sheds were bunched closely around the slipway above it. A primary shed, aligned on the slip, formerly extended back beyond its present inner end which now contains a bench (Fig 39). More gig sheds were added, making 5 or even 6, plus a couple of smaller boathouses. An access track from the east was left between sheds, just wide enough for boat crews and pack animals to use (Figs 34 and 39).

Like other gig ways, the Lake can be strewn with large rocks by stormy seas. Parts of its sides have been rebuilt as necessary in order to keep it open. The Williams family worked on a major restoration shown in an old photo (Fig 40). This view also captures the lost rope-thatch roofs and boarded fronts of the sheds, and the lines used for securing boats within the Lake.

Gigs kept here include *Elaine* (John Williams, pers. comm.) and in earlier times the *Franklin*. *Elaine*, 5-oared, was built by Thomas of St Ives for Israel Hicks of St Agnes for Round Island lighthouse relief work. She was sold to Jack Thomas of St Mary's, and ended smashed up in a gale at Porth Cressa in 1958. The name *Franklin* was also used for a New York paddle-steamer of 1848 (wrecked near her home port in 1854) (Smith 1947, 90). She made a transatlantic crossing in 12 days and 10 hours. Could the gig have been named by pilots of Scilly for this phenomenal ship, after they encountered her?

Later in the 20th century, parts of two gig sheds, and one of the smaller boathouses, were re-roofed. A new shed was added on the west, adapting the earlier site of a few small stores. The access track from the west was already wide enough for a cart when the 1887 OS map was made, and like the slipway it has some old rough paving visible (Fig 41).

Continued use for boats, on a small scale, has helped to maintain the site and preserve the memory of its traditions. One local story tells that the Lake was once defended using pitchforks against people trying to land (John Williams, pers. comm.) Given the age of the site, and its location on the edge of Scilly away from its town and garrison, this could well be a memory of a raiding episode, perhaps during a period of wartime several centuries ago.

The *Porths and Gigs* fieldwork here was carried out courtesy of landowners the Duchy of Cornwall, and with assistance from present-day users of the site.

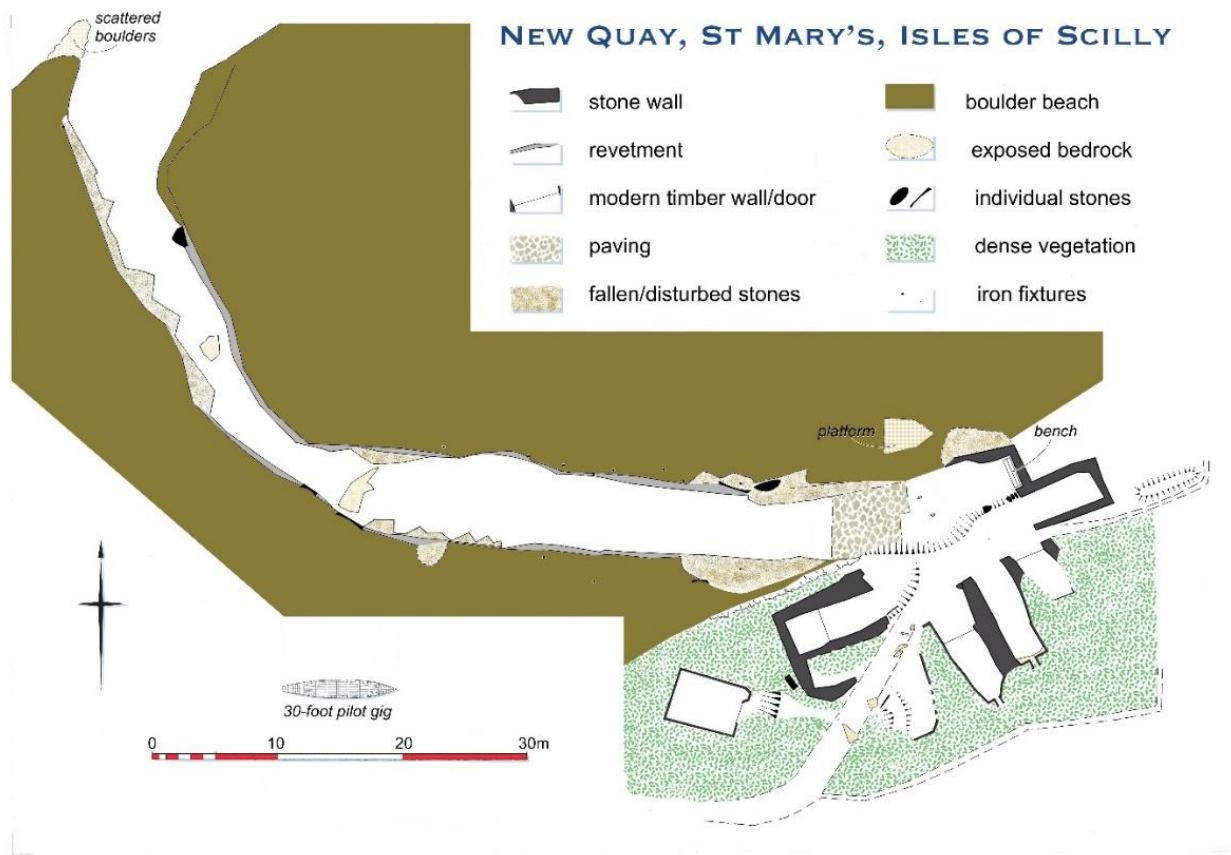


Fig 34 Plan of New Quay, with gig sheds clustered at the slip above the Lake or drang.



Fig 35 East side of imposing entrance to the gig shed furthest south east at New Quay, with one of the shorter but original boat sheds beyond (with later roof and doors).



Fig 36 Traditional gable end window for light and air, south east gig shed, New Quay.



Fig 37 New Quay's 'Lake' or drang passing through the stones of the Brow, on a rising tide. On the horizon are Samson and Bryher (ahead) and Tresco (to the right).



Fig 38 North side of the long inner reach of the Lake. Near the hanging chain, beyond the more tumbled stonework, is early style facing with pitched (vertical) stones.



Fig 39 Gig sheds on the east at New Quay. The stone in the foreground, left, with rope tied on, marks the front end of the original gig shed levelled into the slope below.

That first shed once ran on back from the bench placed inside it which is at the re-positioned inner end wall. Behind the right hand boat is the early path entering the site.



Fig 40 View of New Quay from the Lake, probably early 20th century, courtesy of Mr Williams. Repair of the sides of the drang, using a crane to lift stones, is under way.



Fig 41 Rough paving on the track to New Quay from the west, passing the central gig shed's corner (left); and on the slipway which is now partly renewed with concrete and partly grassy (right).

3D models; New Quay, St Mary's

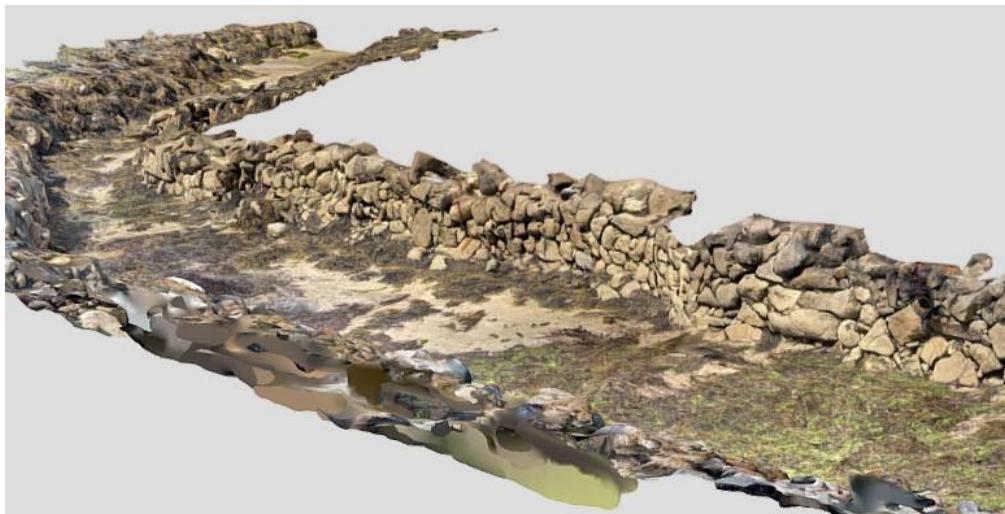


Fig 42 Wide angle Lidar model of the 'Lake' cutting through a 'brow' of coastal boulders.

The name Lake appears on the 1792 map for another drang, at Perconger (Porth Conger) on St Agnes. The Perconger drang was later adopted to serve the coastguard station (now the *Turk's Head* pub) with the station's broad steep slipway dropping into it.

This Lidar (light detection) model of the New Quay site, like the plan, was made at extreme low tide to capture the full extent of the tidal remains (Fig 42). It shows how the Lake slants west through the brow before turning out, so breakers could not sweep straight up it; giving it a J-shaped plan. The base is rock, showing in low ridges in some places and thinly covered in sand in others.

Pilots also put out from sandy beaches – like nearby Pelistry (*Porth Lister* or 'Boat Porth' in Cornish) where the Morris, Tregeary and Williams families kept a shared gig. Tidal ways allowed use of strategic sites otherwise bound by rocks. They even offered greater protection against raiding from the sea, in the early days of pilotage, as their use was dependant on local knowledge.



Fig 43 The Lake in a wide angle Nerf model which can be spun to see the site's setting.

A 'Nerf' model (geometry, texture and lighting data combined in a sort of inter-active 3D impressionist painting!) gives an idea of what it was like to work gigs from here (Fig 43).

To the west on St Mary's, in front of Helvear Hill with its later pine trees, is Tregear Porth with its smaller drang. The little carn on the skyline past Helvear (with a prehistoric entrance grave) marks Innisidgen – another site explored by the project (Part 1.2).

The northern off-islands appear in a great arc on the horizon. The former frequency of gigs based in this area reflects its value for communications between islands, as well as pilotage. Scilly's chaplain, John Troutbeck, noted in 1796 (in the context of Pendrathen, beyond Innisidgen) how this coast served 'for the off island people to land at, and others, who may have business on the East part of St Mary's Island, as well as for the inhabitants of the West part of St Mary's Island, when they pilot out vessels, or have business at the off-islands, and cannot get home, by means of a contrary wind.'

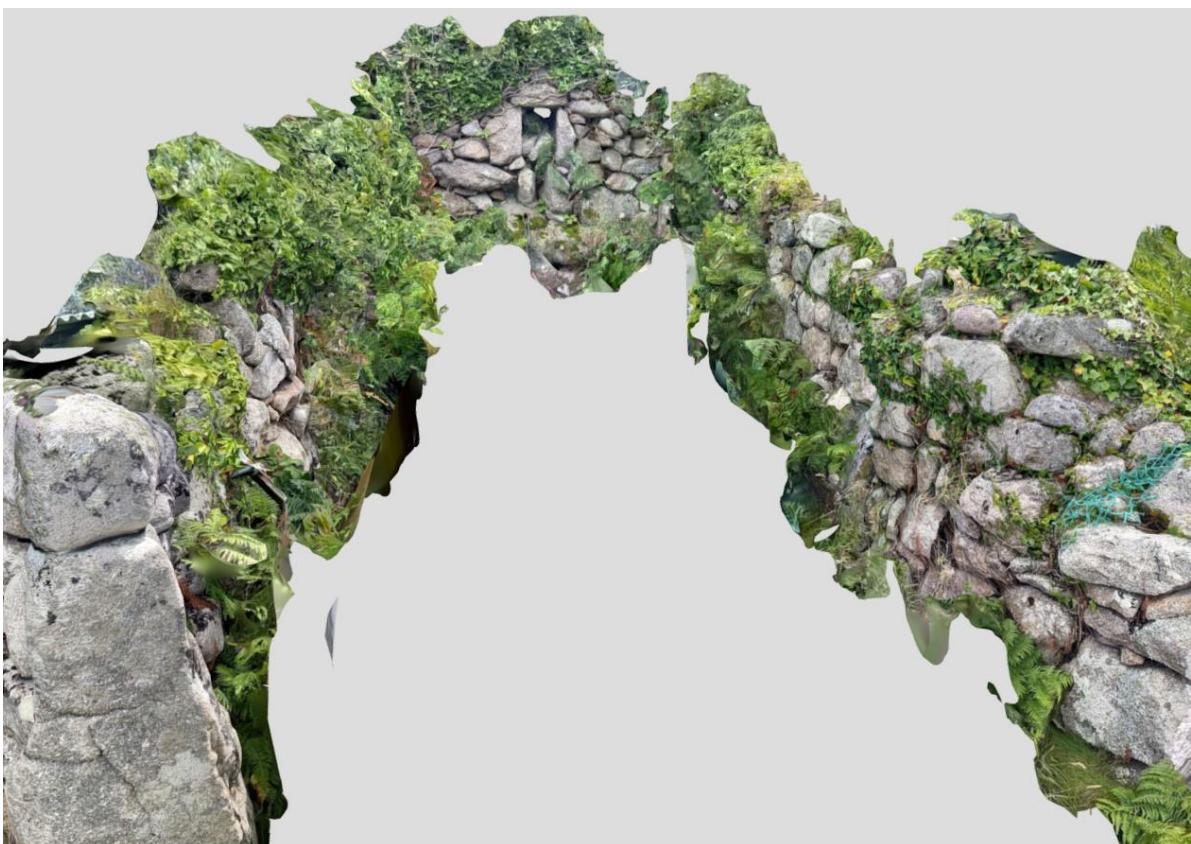


Fig 44 New Quay's south-eastern gig shed; model of the insides of the walls.

This model shows a typical New Quay shed (Fig 44). The walls are partly built into the slope behind, and part covered like the base of the shed by ivy and boats stored in the interior, but their early style and shaping is clear.

The shed bulges slightly in plan, making more space to load or maintain a gig, while limiting the roof span needed. The lines of the walls and the masonry are less regular than in later sheds. Some tile, as well as stone, is used for trigging (filling gaps between the main stones). Its presence may suggest that Bridgwater tile was used for roofing or repair. This shed, though, was thatched when photographed in the early 20th century.

Roofing with salvaged timber and rope thatch was traditional, for sheds as for island houses. Nets of rope holding the thatch were fixed to pegs in wall tops. Peg holes, even actual pegs made of bone, remain in place in buildings elsewhere on Scilly. They could survive here under ivy, as the walls stand to full height or near it.

Drill holes are visible in the massive front slabs. The double doors were hinged on iron hangers in such holes, or were pivoted in sockets cut in slabs laid in the floor.

1.4 Peraskin (Porth Askin), St Agnes – A whole base for pilotage, on an outlying porth

This cove (pronounced ‘Peraskin’) lies on Wingletang Down, at the wild south-western tip of the inhabited islands (Figs 1 and 44). Its Cornish place-name may mean ‘porth of the sedge grass’ (Oliver Padel, pers. comm.). It is eroded by the massive seas from the west, but undisturbed. The main modern change is growth of low scrub, reduced on the gig shed sites by Scilly’s Community Archaeology Group in advance of the survey.

The project plan, made with the help of volunteer surveyor Teän Roberts of Scilly (Fig 8), and the 3D models, capture an outstanding complex of archaeological remains. This shows that the par (the Scillonian word) or porth was a base for gigs, potentially all through the era of pilotage from the 17th to the early 20th centuries. It was placed here for proximity to the hazardous Western Approaches. (As old maps show, around 1800, as today, the nearest hamlet was Higher Town, half a mile away.)

There are ruins of five gig sheds. Three sheds, a single one and a pair, are Scheduled Monuments, protected by law as well as by the islanders, some of whom are descendants of the pilots (Mike Hicks and Harry Legg, pers. comms.). Despite this, they are threatened, due to gradually advancing coastal erosion and accelerating sea level rise.

The shed walls remain as earthworks, banks of sand and turf with some stonework still visible (Figs 46-49). There may once have been even more sheds. The shore has become eroded back, and shrouded in small sandhills, especially on the south east where it’s possible more sheds once stood. The sheds are aligned with drangs, called trackways here, running through deep beds of seaweedy stones. These emerge on ebb tides, showing where gigs were carried to and fro on the bed of the sea (Figs 50-52).

Peraskin was used to house the *Cetewayo*, the fastest gig on Scilly in her heyday around the time of Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee of 1887. *Cetewayo* was built by Peters to work in St Ives, but was subsequently bought by pilots of St Agnes and kept here until broken up after winning a regatta in the early 20th century (Jenkins 1975, 59).

The name of the old *Cetewayo*, also given to St Agnes’ latest gig, built by Patrick Bird (Fig 53), is that of a Zulu King, celebrated in Britain in 1882. *Cetewayo*, or *Cetshwayo kaMpande*, was King from 1872 of Zululand in present-day South Africa. In 1879, 24,000 Zulu warriors routed British forces but were soon defeated, and *Cetewayo* was held captive in Cape Town, in a conflict widely seen as unjustly pursued by Britain.

In 1882, however, King *Cetewayo* was permitted to visit London for several weeks. On August 4th he landed at Southampton and travelled by train to reside at 18 Melbury Road, Kensington, now marked by one of English Heritage’s Blue Plaques. The King was hugely popular, and he gained the support of some British statesmen (Fig 54). Crowds followed and cheered him as he negotiated his reinstatement. He returned to Zululand in 1883, but further turmoil there, and perhaps treachery, led to his death in 1884 after which his young heir *Dinizulu* was proclaimed king (Blue Plaques website.)

Cornish newspapers reported that King *Cetewayo* arrived from Cape Town on the *Arab*, a 350 foot steamer. On August 3rd on passage to Southampton, *Arab* touched at Plymouth, after a rough run from Madeira in a severe gale. People crowded to Plymouth to see the powerful figure of *Cetewayo*. He sat on deck with his chiefs, in a pilot coat (*West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser*, August 10th 1882, 3; *Cornubian and Redruth Times* August 11th 1882, 4). On his departure, the King left from Plymouth, again in a gale, on the *Nubian* (*op cit*, September 8th 1882, 6), a steamer very like the *Arab*.

Possibly *Cetewayo* was named after her crew provided pilotage to the King’s steamer, or one of their number encountered the scene in Plymouth after serving another ship.

Islanders will have known *Cetewayo* by reputation also. Admiral Sir Houston Stewart, Commander-in-Chief of Devonport, took the King in his yacht *Vivid* to see a gunnery ship and factory before he left Plymouth (*ibid*). The following month the Admiral promoted to flag-lieutenant A.H. Smith Dorrien, of the Tresco family, specifically citing his services in the Zulu War (*Cornishman*, October 19th 1882, 5).



Fig 45 Peraskin on a rising tide, with the huge boulders on its shore still protruding.

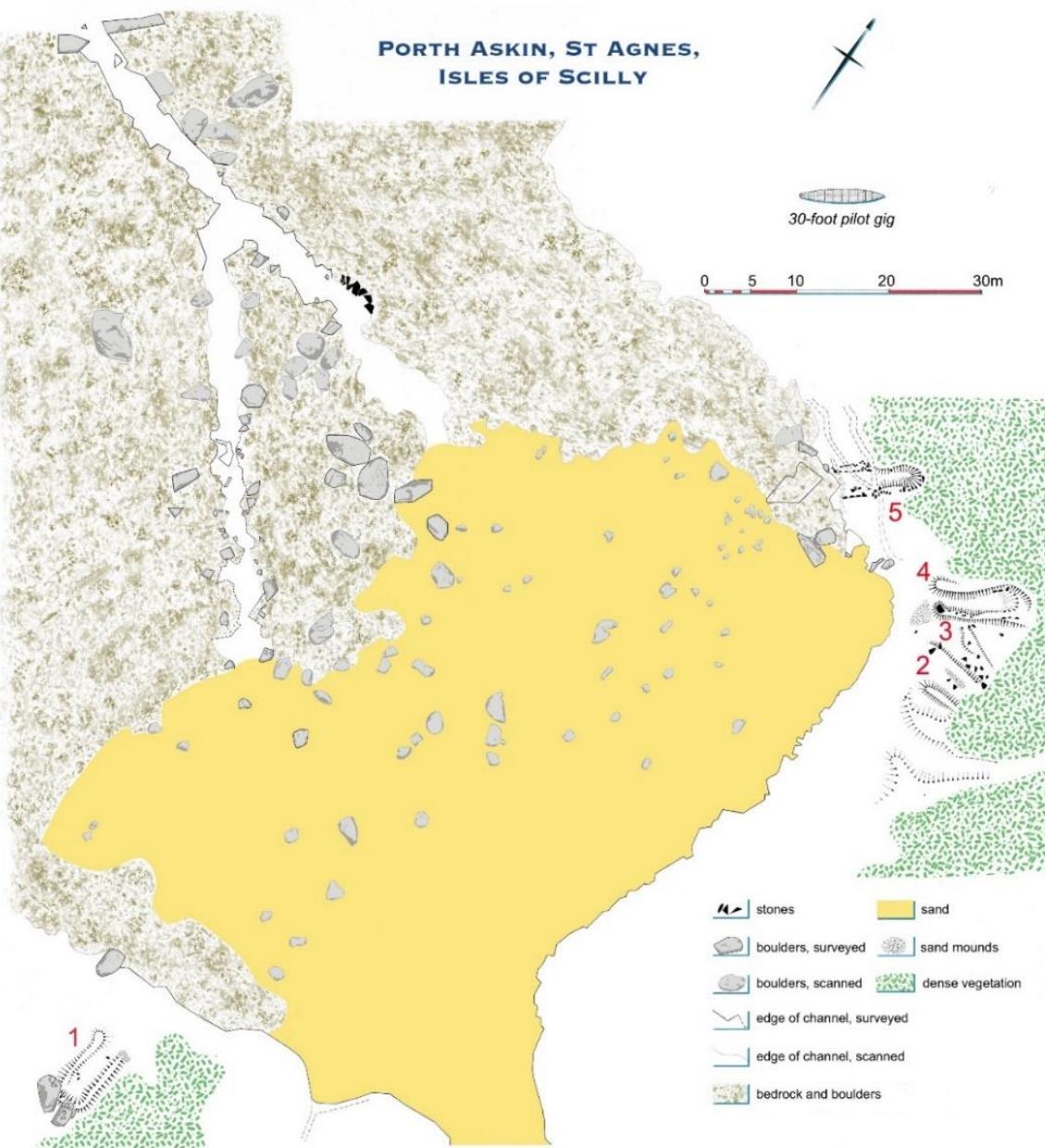


Fig 46 Plan of Peraskin (given as Porth Askin on maps); gig sheds are numbered in red.



Fig 47 Early gig shed no. 1 at Peraskin, seen from the rocks behind it (1m scale).



Fig 48 Looking south across Peraskin's central gig sheds, nos. 2-4. Beyond the site, the sea to the east of St Agnes appears across the ridge of Wingletang Down.

Gigs kept here could have been used either side of the headland, adding to the strategic value of the site as a base for pilotage at the south west tip of the inhabited land of Scilly.



Fig 49 Peraskin's north shed, no. 5, associated with the late-19th century gig Cetewayo. Its seaward end, in the foreground, is being cut back by coastal erosion.



Fig 50 Peraskin on an ebb tide, with the beds of its two trackways for gigs emerging. The junction of the two (centre photo) lies a couple of boat lengths in from the open sea.



Fig 51 Alignment of rocks placed between natural outcrops, retaining the spread of the boulder beach, on the north side of the drangs or trackways at Peraskin.

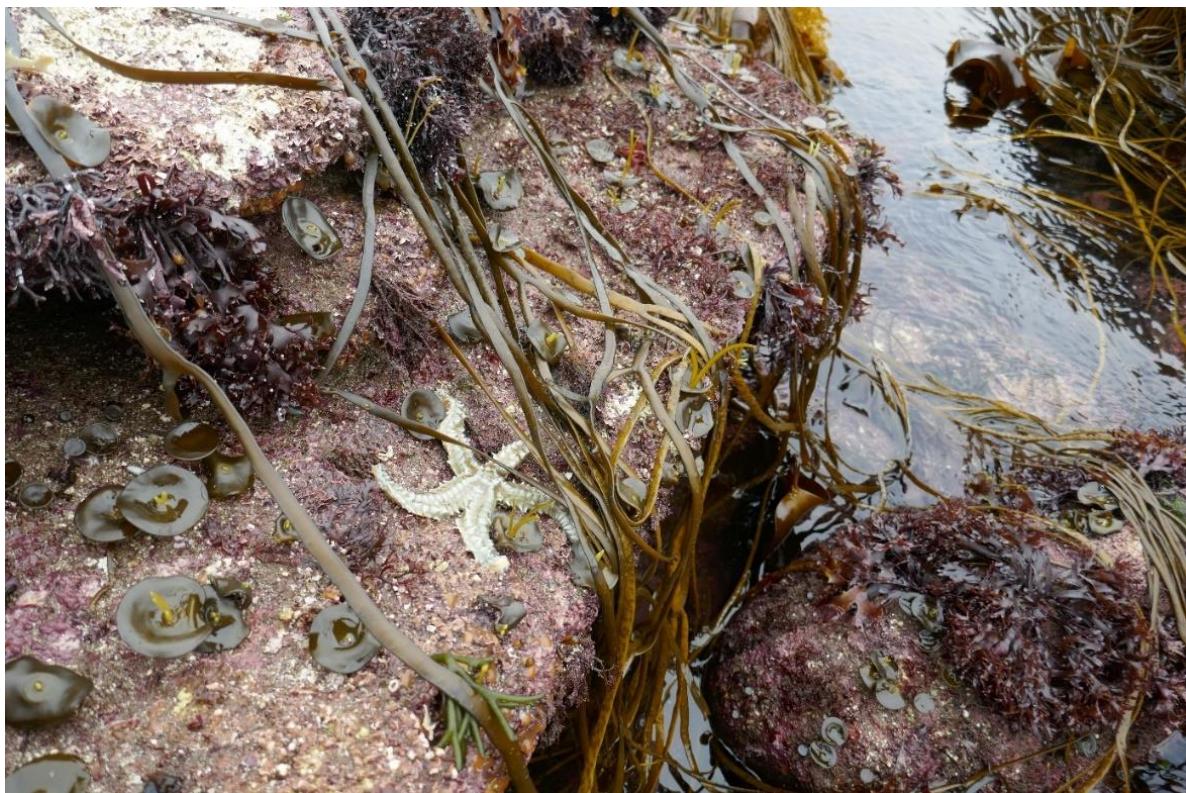


Fig 52 Archaeology and marine ecology meet at the mouth of Peraskin's drangs or trackways, only uncovered at exceptionally low tides.



Fig 53 2024 launch at Perconger, St Agnes, of the new Cetewayo, built by Patrick Bird (photo by Julian Pearce on St Agnes Gig Club Facebook page).



Fig 54 King Cetewayo, wearing his traditional isicoco, a head-ring worn by Zulu men, in London in 1882. (© National Portrait Gallery, London. Thanks to the Gallery and to the English Heritage Blue Plaques website for the photo and for caption content.)

3D models; Peraskin (Porth Askin), St Agnes

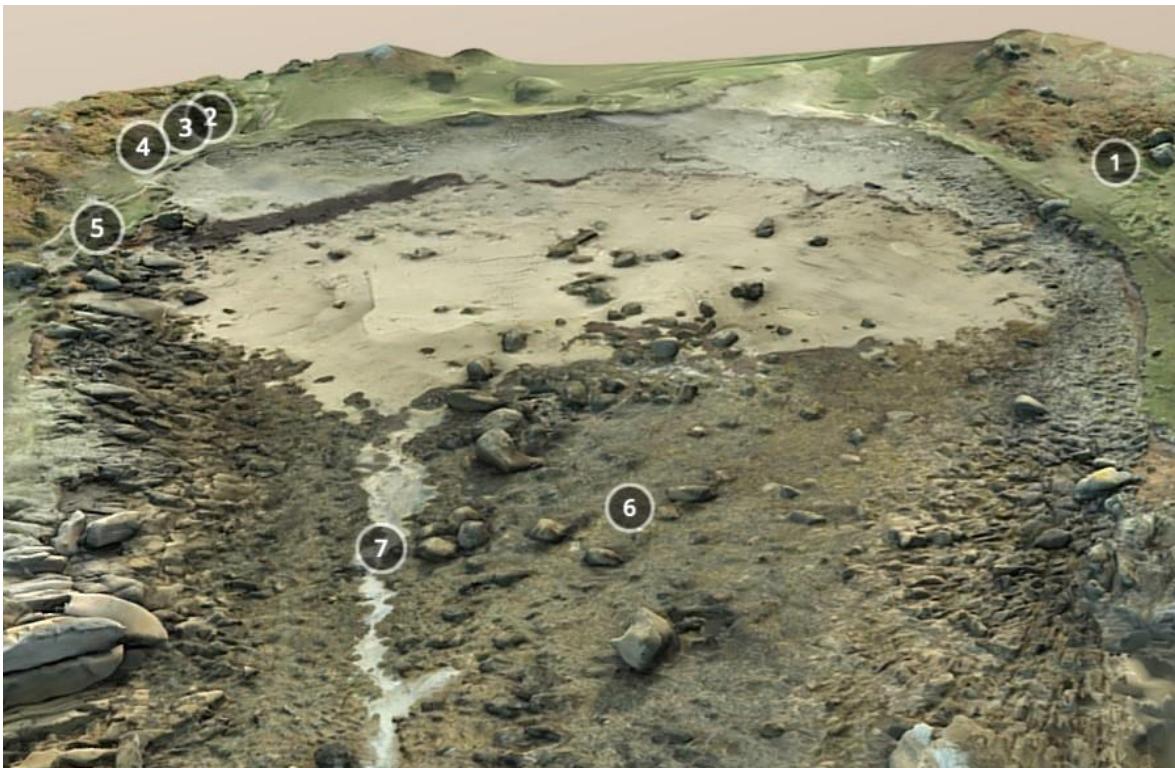


Fig 55 Screenshot of model of the whole of Peraskin, looking in from the seaward side.

A project model shows the whole par (Fig 55). Numbers mark points of interest, noted below (the sheds have the same numbers here as they do in the survey plan, Fig 46).

(1) Early gig shed on the south. This shed is a turf ruin, built against natural rocks as shown in a separate model. It was made, used, and reduced to slight banks, all before 1888, when it went unseen by the surveyors making the detailed OS map.

It could be that use of a shed ceased, out of distress and respect, after loss of a gig's crew at sea. Such a disaster occurred 'some years' before 1822. Two men of St Agnes, part of a crew rescuing survivors from a wreck on Scilly Rock, were drowned when the gig overturned (Woodley 1822, 312-313). Some sheds may have fallen out of use when pilotage was controlled by licensing (of pilots rather than gigs) from 1810.

In 2019 this shed was found and planned by visiting archaeologists Tom and Elisabeth Greeves (Greeves 2024). The *Porths and Gigs* survey, made at extra low tide, shows how it relates to the southern gig trackway (at point 6). The OS surveyors did find and plot this trackway, in 1888, indirectly adding to the evidence of an early date for the shed that had been used in conjunction with it.

(2) South part of a double shed, in a cluster of sheds on the north east. With its other half shed (3), it is aligned on another gig trackway at (7). This double shed is now a Scheduled Monument. In 1888 it had no roof, but its long walls were near-intact, as shown by the map of that date.

These sheds, facing west into prevailing winds, have linear banks of sand blown through them, as well as others accumulated along the side walls. Another bank runs roughly parallel outside Shed 2, on the south. This may mark the end of an old route to Peraskin across Wingletang Down, worn down by pack animals or carts brought here to carry away freight or salvage brought in by the gigs.

There are no clear signs on the ground of inner end walls to the double shed. They could lie under sand. However, the OS found none back in 1888. Possibly these sheds had doors at each end, so their gigs could be carried across the 100m 'neck' of the headland behind to launch to the east at Beady Pool if conditions were better there (Fig 48).

(3) North part of the double shed. Scheduled together with 2 alongside. Both have accumulated blown sand since their roofs were lost before 1888. Here, there are also some displaced stones, perhaps once gathered ready with the intention to re-use them. Some doubles started single, as at Little Cove Vean, St Agnes (where the second one is shorter). Others appear built as a pair, like those mapped as one block in 1887 at Town Beach, St Mary's (where Golden Bay Mansions now stands; Alfred Trenear, pers. comm.) Possibly original pairs were built for organisations like Lloyd's who kept their gigs *Lloyd's White* and *Lloyd's Green* (Fig 106) at Town Beach (Jenkins 1975, 64). Other sheds may have been doubled, when pilots bought a second gig.

A St Agnes gig *Wasp* appears at Peraskin on an old painting (Patrick Bird, pers. comm.). The *Bee* was apparently based on St Agnes by 1841 when she went out to the wreck of the *Thames*. (See Fig 20 for the discovery of remains attributed to the *Bee* herself.) Could these two gigs *Bee* and *Wasp*, with names seemingly related, have been housed here?

(4) Relatively recent pilot gig shed. clearly built after the pair on its south as its front protrudes slightly across that of Shed (3). This one stayed in use later too, being shown as roofed and labelled Boat House on the 1888 map. However, it was just a shell by the time that map was revised in 1906.

The shed was re-discovered by Teän Roberts during the project survey. It has low banks where its walls were, with some stones still in place. Like many old sheds its base has a regular slant, which helps identify its extent. Sloping floors meant steeper or rockier sites could be used with minimal groundworks, and may have helped to speed launching.

Some of the lore of gig launching at speed including at night has been recorded (Gillis 1978, 5). Rivalry for pilotage at Falmouth and St Mawes, it was said, led to a crew going to launch without boats to avoid alerting others. On Scilly, oars are said to have borne notches, to help identify their rowing position numbers quickly in the dark (*op cit*, 15).

(5) Northern gig shed. This shed is Scheduled, like double shed (2-3). It is parallel with Shed (4), and may be of a similar date, c1880 if newly built for the gig *Cetewayo* it is linked to (below). Also like (4) it still had a roof when mapped in 1888. However, it was soon reduced, as the 1906 map showed nothing here.

This shed is identified locally as that of the old *Cetewayo* (Patrick Bird and Tristan Hick, pers. comm.), renowned for her speed, named for the Zulu King famous in Britain c1882 (see introduction to Part 1.4, above; and the separate 3D model of this shed, below).

Possibly *Cetewayo* was moved around 1900 to Shed (2), as that shed appears from the map evidence to have been kept up later. Gigs are known to have been moved in the past between sheds, in the same porth or at another, on occasion, following storm damage or other changes; as well as being sometimes sold on to another island's pilots.

(6) South drang or trackway. This drang, or trackway as these features are called on St Agnes, is fairly choked with stones and boulders, and cloaked by seaweed growing on the stones. It may have ceased to be maintained relatively early; shed (1) which it served fell out of use well before 1888.

The sea has shifted its sides, or covered them in stone. Its approximate span can be seen though, as the layer of stones filling it is thinner than the natural boulder bed alongside. The junction of this trackway and the one that served the northern sheds (7) is intriguing. As this way kinks at the junction, it might have been joined on to (7), making it later in date. This would imply that one or more of the northern sheds, aligned with (7), were earlier in origin too.

However, the makers of the ways had to route them to avoid the larger inter-tidal natural rocks that are a feature of Peraskin (Figs 45 and 46). It may be that the seemingly primary north trackway was actually joined on to, or contemporary with, this southern one which had to kink to get a good course between rocks too massive to move.

(7) North drang or trackway. This trackway is relatively clear, probably at least in part because it was kept open into the 1900s for the use of the old *Cetewayo*.

Some of its facing stones, set up by the pilots between the larger natural boulders to hold back the beach rocks, can be seen standing *in situ*. Others may be still in place under shifted stone and thick seaweed. This facing is marked in black on the site plan, like that visible in places in the gig shed walls especially at shed (5). The more massive, rounded boulders, protruding even at higher tides, must have determined the positioning of the trackways and so of the gig sheds (Figs 45 and 46).

At exceptionally low tides, as when the *Porths and Gigs* fieldwork took place, the full extent of the trackway is revealed; together with the flourishing seaweed and marine life harbouring in it that help make this area a Site of Special Scientific Interest. As elsewhere on Scilly, with the passing of time many archaeological sites become rich in ecology as well as historical meaning.



Fig 56 LiDAR model of Peraskin gig shed (1), looking in from the low edge of the beach.

The model of the long-lost shed on the south, gone before 1888, shows how it was built against two rocks rising head high. These outcrops have solution basins worn in their tops by centuries of weathering (Fig 56).

Wingletang Down, the headland above Peraskin, is one of Scilly's most dramatic 'rockscapes'. It has hundreds of outcrops and prominent carn's with spectacular shapes and basins. There are dozens of Scheduled Monuments, including Early Bronze Age entrance graves and cairns sited like the gig sheds partly in response to the natural rocks.

The two boulders at shed (1) have fairly vertical sides, used to form the shed's inner end with masonry filling the gap between them. Many old structures on Scilly, from barns to fortifications, incorporate outcropping rocks where these stood convenient for use.

The banks where the side walls stood run half way from the two natural rocks to the present head of the beach. In this screenshot they can be seen slanting forwards and left from in front of the two rocks, defining a slight hollow between them. The earthwork appears to be a typical ruined gig shed – just large enough for a gig at 10 paces long and (allowing for wall tumble) 2 to 3 paces wide inside.



Fig 57 LiDAR model of Peraskin shed (5) on a small ram cliff with bedrock below.

The shed on the north attributed to *Cetewayo* is also Scheduled. It is listed by Historic England as being 'At Risk'. Its front end, on a low and eroding cliff, has been destroyed by the sea, as can be seen in this separate model (Fig 57). It has also been worn by several strands of the coast path, which run across its centre and its front end.

Due to the natural erosion, the walls are more exposed towards the shed front. They are narrow and regular compared to those of early sheds like New Quay's. Their width is more standard, c0.9m, and they were built up in courses. The wall cores are the traditional subsoil, or ram, however.

As the wall faces are visible, it is possible to determine the width of the inside of the shed (obscured by blown sand at many other ruined sites). It is barely over 2m wide, just sufficient for the gig plus the crew who would have taken up positions for carrying her in and out (as crews do today) at intervals along each side of her, holding the gunwales.

There is no trace of a slipway, yet the site is several metres above the beach. Timber ramps, known as 'ways', may have been laid here. Ways are remembered on Bryher as having been used at the shed of the *Golden Eagle* of similar date (1870) at Great Porth, (thanks to Richard Pearce for information). Wooden ways were also used at the Sussex house near the sandy Bar on that island (Gillis 1978, 15).

This northern shed, with its walling clearly visible, together with its trackway or drang below at point (7), gives a strong sense of how the old *Cetewayo* was housed and worked by the pilots, just six generations ago.

1.5 Great Par, Bryher – Sheds of renowned gigs, worked by rival groups of pilots

Czar is the only historic gig on Scilly never kept away from the islands and still rowed and raced here today (Tresco & Bryher Gig Rowing Club website) (Figs 58 and 59). Built by Peters in 1879, she was originally fitted for seven oars; a Victorian renewal of a St Mawes tradition of 400 years ago, of 7- or even 8-oared gigs, banned in Georgian times to avoid smugglers using them to evade excise vessels (Part 1.2, and Fig 28).

Czar was formerly kept at Great Par, or Porth. Gig sheds once stood in three places, or possibly four, spaced around the north half of the par, serving rival pilotage concerns (Fig 60). Dispersed sheds (or clusters of them) elsewhere, as at Peraskin, St Agnes, may again have belonged to different gig shareholding groups. Sheds were also placed apart to make use of the relative shelter afforded by corners of beaches.

The old *Czar* shed is now a Scheduled Monument. The project's plan of the site, made with the help of volunteer trainee Layan Harman (Figs 61 and 62), shows the lack of an inner end wall, which reflects the unusual provision of gig doors at each end of the shed. Slipways alongside and in front served the two ends.

The panorama seen from the *Czar* shed site takes in the hazardous rocks in the open sea beyond, including Mincarlo (the islet with undulating profile, on the skyline beyond the south side of the opening of the porth) and the taller, steeper Castle Bryher (Fig 63).

Being set on a very low shore, this shed is especially vulnerable to the sea. It has sand and stones cast up on it, and boulders placed on its front to keep the waves back. The surviving walling is low, and the front slipway is no longer visible (Figs 64 and 65).

However, a rare close-up photo of c1950 how it looked when still in use (Fig 66). It was thatched with rushes or reeds from pools and inlets (Chris Potterton, pers. comm.). In the 1960s *Czar* was shifted to the *Eagle* shed to its south, which was covered with thatch, then tiles, then corrugated iron, then restored with red tiles (Nick Jenkins, Richard Pearce and David Stedeford, pers. comms.). Red 'Double Roman' tiles were in use on Scilly by 1800; they were shipped from Bridgwater, Somerset (Figs 5 and 100).

To the north is the site of the double shed of the 1844 gig *Albion*, and probably the *March* (Richard Jenkins, pers. comm.). This site, unmarked on the ground, is still unforgettable as the base from which an astonishing rescue was carried out in 1871 (Fig 67).

The Liverpool steamer *Delaware* foundered west of Samson, near Mincarlo (Fig 63), in a foul winter gale (*Cornish Telegraph*, December 27th 1871, 2-3). It was impossible to reach the wreck from Great Porth in the face of the hurricane conditions. A Bryher crew carried their gig (known locally to have been *Albion*) from here to Rushy Bay at the south end of the island, pulled across to Samson, carried *Albion* across the Neck of Samson, and launched again into 'furious waves, shoulder-deep' to reach White Island, where the only two sailors who ultimately survived had been driven by the gale on a broken lifeboat.

The *Albion* crew pulled back to Samson, wrapped the two survivors in some of their own clothing, and made a rough refuge for them in a fern rick (see further Part 2.2). They swayed (signalled by waving a jacket) from North Hill, for another gig (identified locally as *March*) to pull across from Bryher. They then pulled the *March* back to Bryher, taking the survivors to be cared for in the nearest house. (The *March* crew later carried *Albion* back across Samson from West Porth before returning home.) The *Albion* men who achieved this humanitarian feat were Richard Ellis, James Jenkin, junior, Stephen Woodcock, and John Webber; William Woodcock, William Jenkin, John Jacob Jenkin, Thomas Bickford, and Sampson Jenkin, and cox'n Patrick Trevillick, aged 21 to 50.

The detailed OS map of 1888 marks a feature at the north end of Great Par consistent with its being the gable end of one half of the double shed. This fits with the local memory of a ruined wall visible there through the 20th century (Richard Pearce, pers. comm.).

It is not clear if anything now remains at the double shed site. The gable left in 1888 may have stood just behind the modern sea defences (where the ground has been dug out and built up with rock armour) – so there could perhaps be some survival of part of the shed's footings.



Fig 58 Czar attended the wreck of the Minnehaha in 1910, saving live cattle, seen here swimming alongside the gig. The cattle were secured by ropes to the thole pins (Fraser Hicks, pers. comm.). (Photograph by Gibson © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.)



Fig 59 Czar racing over a century later; thanks to Aaron Haile and Jonathan Taylor.



Fig 60 The north end of Great Porth or Par as it's called on Scilly, seen from Great Carn. The corner of the beach to the front right may also have had a gig shed (Part 3, Site 44).



Fig 61 Surveying the Czar shed, by measuring off at right angles from a baseline tape. This method allows rapid accurate survey of smaller sites with minimal equipment.

CZAR SHED, GREAT PORTH, BRYHER, ISLES OF SCILLY

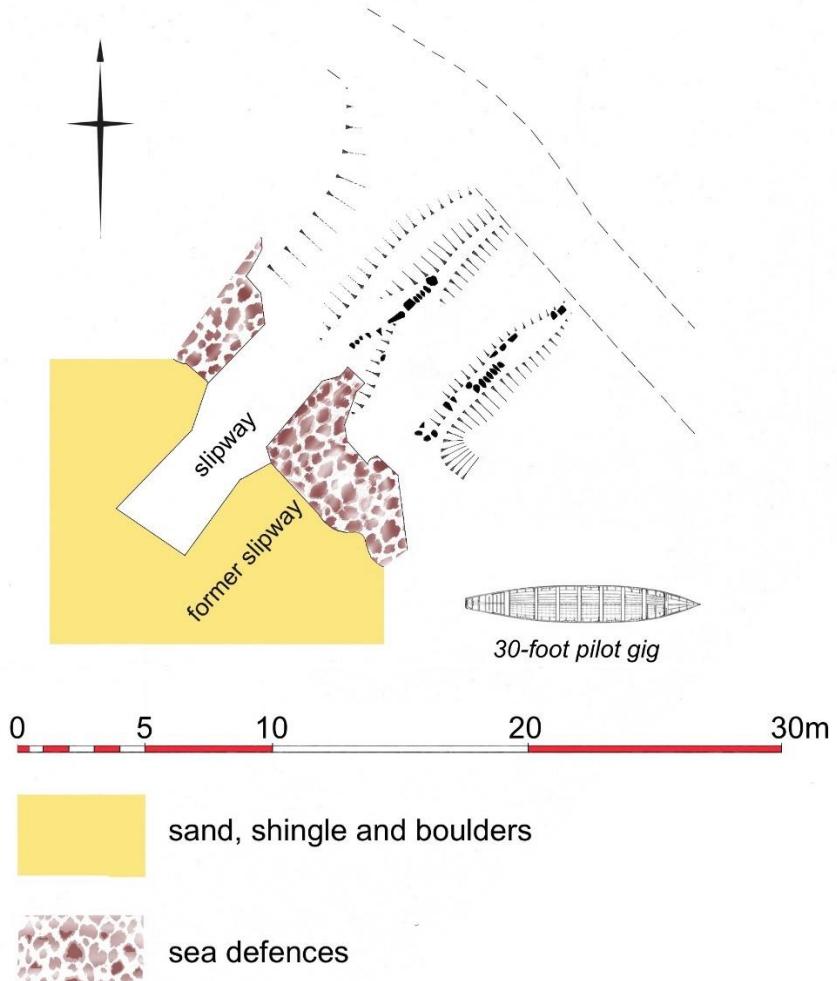


Fig 62 Plan of the Czar shed, with the site of a slipway in front, and the slip alongside (that would have formerly given access to the back of the shed) which is still used.



Fig 63 Panoramic view of the northern half of Great Porth. The base of the Czar shed lies in the wild flowers in the foreground; the Albion shed site is to the far right.

Mincarlo is on the horizon to the right of the left-hand side of the mouth of Great Porth. Castle Bryher is the more pyramidal islet skylined beyond the right-hand side of the porth.



Fig 64 The Czar shed in 2023 after vegetation control revealed more of its wall bases.



Fig 65 Indications of a slip below the Czar shed (spanning the foreground), in 2019. Some stones appear laid with one side aligned, similar to those that edge old slipways.



Fig 66 The landward end of the Czar shed, seen from the south, around the middle of the 20th century. (Courtesy of Isles of Scilly Museum archive, ref. no. RN07507.)



Fig 67 Former site of the double shed that housed the Albion and probably March, on the north side of Great Porth (thanks to Richard Jenkins for information).

The lost shed here was that from which the two gigs were carried nearly half a mile to Rushy Bay, even before they could be launched, to save lives in a westerly gale in 1871.

3D models; Czar shed, Great Par, Bryher



Fig 68 Screenshot of Czar shed model showing its siting on a low shore, exposed to the waves, which has resulted in boulders being piled on its front against the sea.

The numbers shown (also visible on the interactive 3D model on the website) mark the points of interest noted below.

(1) The interior of the Czar shed can be seen, and felt underfoot, despite the vegetation growth, forming a distinct strip south of slipway (4). The actual floor lies under blown sand. The *Golden Eagle* shed nearby had beach cobbles making a hard but permeable floor suitable to prevent gigs from drying out (Richard Pearce, pers. comm.)

A winch in the grass here is unrelated to the use of the shed. Early gigs were broader and heavier, but the traditional fine elm planking used also in today's racing gigs (like that seen in the *Nornour* nailng model in Fig 22) meant they could be carried by a crew of 7 – each bearing a load of over 1 cwt or 50 kilos.

The track behind the sheds is the route used to carry *Albion* half a mile to launch at Rushy Bay at the start of the 1871 rescue. This route developed to serve the sheds, linking them to hilltop lookouts and to the dwellings, concentrated to the east in 1792 but established here at Pool before 1888 as old maps show. *Czar* was sometimes secured to a tree east of the track, to prevent damage when gales struck at high tides (Gerald Langdon, pers. comm.).

(2) Side wall of the Czar shed. This southern long wall is clearer than that on the north side against slipway (4). It rises a little higher, and has more stone visible. The bases of the walls, like the floor, are buried in stabilised blown sand and tumbled stones. As shown by the mid-20th century photo of this site (Fig 66), originally the sides of the shed rose to typical gig shed eaves level at c1.5m or shoulder high. Their stonework appears to have been more irregular than that seen in the sheds seen in another of the *Porths and Gigs* models at New Quay, St Mary's, where much walling is near-intact (Part 1.3; Fig 35).

In the past, sheds would have had gear stored against their walls, on wall tops, and hanging in the roof timbers or laid on planks across them, as they often do today. Old houses and barns had neat 'keeping places' built into their walls, as can be seen for example in the ruins on Samson; but these were probably not usual in early gig sheds with their less regular stonework. A ruined gig shed on the 'neck' of Samson has a small timber lean-to store at one end, and this arrangement appears to date from around 200 years ago (Part 2.2, and Fig 96).

(3) The open inner end reflects the original design of the shed with double doors at each end. Elsewhere on Scilly, sheds opening only to landward occur, where winds laden with sand could hamper doorways – as can be seen from the walling of a roofless shed at Green Porth, Tresco (Fig 105).

St Mary's first lifeboat house, founded in 1874, now the library, had doors at both ends, to allow launching at Town Beach as well as Porth Cressa. Possibly this design feature was adopted from there for this shed, if it was newly built (or rebuilt) when the *Czar* was made in 1879.

Here the 2 doorways would have let *Czar* pass through whichever end was better to use in the weather and sea conditions, as well as helping with moving her back from the shed to be secured away from storm surges if needed. Perhaps the shed was made earlier for a shorter gig, and the inland doorway was added to accommodate the length of *Czar*? This could be a reason for the irregular stonework there seen in Figure 66.

The shed is remembered as having borne the name *CZAR* on a timber above its doors (Richard Pearce, pers. comm.).

(4) A concrete slipway alongside replaces an original slip; the hollow way running to it has possible stone surfacing and, like the shed, was mapped in 1888. It was linked to the double doors at the back of the gig shed via the track there.

On the beach immediately west of the shed, stone edging, indicating a separate front slipway, has been visible at times. This may now have gone, as sea defences in this area have been renewed.

Further down, the beach is largely free of boulders, and the map of 1888 shows it was similar at that time. This meant there was no need to make a drang for gigs to pass through the inter-tidal zone.

Shores can change greatly with the movement of beach material, as can be seen by comparison of the historic maps and later aerial photographs of different phases. They can be covered in sand, or sand can be moved away, and they can be strewn with boulders.

At the rockiest porths, keeping gigs may not have been possible. Porth Minick, St Mary's, has no signs of use by gigs, despite proximity to Old Town. The sand accumulated there at present appears to be relatively recent, not shown on the maps of 1906 or earlier, and the Cornish name of the place means 'Stony Porth'. It may be that boulders were so dense and mobile there that clearing a drang for gigs was not feasible.



Fig 69 'Nerf' model of the setting of the Czar shed on Great Porth (behind and to the left of the hollow way in the foreground running to the slipway alongside the shed).

The roof of the Golden Eagle shed is to the left in the middle ground. The possible location of a more recent shed, Site 43 in Part 3, is behind the neck of land on the skyline, right.

Returning to Bryher's Great Porth, a 3D Nerf model, accessible on the project website, which can be spun and zoomed like the project's other 3D models, shows other gig sheds, or their sites, in the setting of the *Czar* shed.

To the south, as shown in the Nerf model screenshot Figure 69, is the red-tiled roof of the *Golden Eagle* shed restored as a studio, once thatched like that of the *Czar*. On the far south side of Great Porth, a thin 'neck' of land runs out west to Heathy Hill. Across the 'neck', on Stony Porth, the possible site of a shed with some bits of red tile can be seen on the ground (Fig 100). An old photo shows a feature on the skyline resembling a roof there (Richard Pearce, pers. comm.). If a gig shed, this was not standing c1888-1906, as it does not appear on the maps of those dates. Together with other possible locations of gig sheds, it is included in the summary of sites forming Part 3 of this report (Site 43).

To the north of the *Czar* shed is the site of an earlier double shed, that housed the *Albion*, and probably March, renowned for the 1871 *Delaware* rescue (thanks to Richard Jenkins for information). It was ruined before 1888, but part of its gable end remained in living memory (Richard Pearce, pers. comm.). It stood beyond a concrete drain, which runs from the Pool behind that gave its name to the hamlet here, first established as a dwelling place in the 19th century when the use of Great Porth for pilotage was thriving.

1.6 Beacon Hill, Tresco – Hilltop platform that once had a mast for pilots to signal to ships

North of New Grimsby, on the highest point of Tresco at 40m OD, is a rare type of lookout, with a strong platform and the recorded site of a signal mast (Fig 70). It stands in one of Scilly's largest SMs, an area of 101 acres, on the ridge of Castle Down crowned by Beacon Hill. The name of the hill probably refers to a fire beacon, likely to have had some association with the artillery forts nearby, King Charles' Castle and Cromwell's Castle.

The same Scheduling also contains other archaeology, Bronze Age to post-medieval in date. This includes a rectangular platform defined by a low bank on the ridge above Gimble Point, resembling the 'turf steads' found on Cornish moors. These held ricks of 'turf', slabs of peat skimmed from the downs (or dug from deeper bogs where these existed), dried in the sun and ricketed ready to be taken away for use.

Turf was the main winter fuel, with furze (gorse) and driftwood, in post-medieval times. The platform on Castle Down is large, 24m long, so if it was a turf stead, may have been used by a group with common rights to share in the turf (or in the sale of it). Ricks were also made to store ferns (bracken) for animal bedding, and one on the Neck of Samson has a particular significance for the story of how the Bryher crew of the gig *Albion* saved lives from the wreck of the *Delaware* in 1871, explored in Parts 1.5 and 2.2.

Here on Beacon Hill, some time before c1750, a ship's captain donated a mast to be set up so that pilots could show, by raising 'colours' (flags), that they were putting out (in response to ships signalling for a pilot with their own colours and guns). Flag signalling was customary for pilots, who flew their own pennants on ships where they worked, enabling their crews to take them off afterwards (Fraser Hicks, pers. comm.). The views from the Beacon Hill platform are wide, as shown by the 360° panorama (Fig 71). However, the mast here was actually used more as a mark for the entrance to New Grimsby harbour, and it was disused before the end of the 18th century.

A disaster a few decades later showed the deadly risks when signalling failed. During the gales, almost incessant, of winter 1822-1823, a ship appeared off the back of Tresco, flying colours for a pilot. A Bryher gig took a pilot out and put him on the ship, but the signal flag was not lowered. A Tresco gig, crewed by a branch-pilot (Trinity House licensed) and four other men, pulled out. As the gig came close to the ship, within two ship's lengths, a tremendous sea overturned it.

The Bryher pilot begged the ship's captain in vain to lower a boat, or go about; the captain dared not risk the ship. Three of the Tresco crew were drowned; the other two men were taken up by a second gig from Tresco and brought back to the care of the surgeon there, Mr Molloy (*Royal Cornwall Gazette*, April 5 1823, 4).

The 3D model of the Beacon Hill lookout reveals traces of how it was made and adapted over time. Features were freed of low scrub ready for the scanning, thanks to Scilly's CAG (Community Archaeology Group) (Fig 72). Gorse bushes were left standing, as the area is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and the gorse may be a refuge for birds.

Troutbeck's late 18th century account says the site had ruins of a round tower. This could have stood on the ground or on the platform. Possibly it was similar to a rounded lookout on a rectangular plinth at the naval signal station of 1794 on Dodman Head, on the south coast of Cornwall east of Falmouth (Fig 73). This is more the height of a pulpit than a tower, but with its stepped-up base it opens up wider views. Its shell of walling, large enough for a couple of people, has remains of an iron fitting to steady a telescope.

Pilots using the Beacon Hill lookout may have worked out of New or Old Grimsby to either side. The 1887 map shows traces of an old route to Point, New Grimsby. Paved slipways remain at Point (Fig 74), at the site of the gig sheds seen in the 1862 painting on the cover of this report. The *Zelda* of 1874 was once kept there (Richard Jenkins, Bryher, pers. comm.). (See further Site 56 in Part 3.) Gig crews elsewhere on Tresco could use carns to keep watch and signal, as no doubt at Carn Near to the south where the gigs *Gleaner* and *Longkeel* were kept (Joby Newton, pers. comm.) (Fig 75).

The Beacon Hill scanning was carried out courtesy of landholders the Tresco Estate.



Fig 70 Top of the Beacon Hill lookout. The wall, centre, may mark a stepping back of the top of the platform when it was rebuilt, to avoid building out to the original edge.

The view, looking north east, takes in Round Island (in the centre behind St Helens) and St Martin's (to the right beyond Teän).



Fig 71 Panorama showing the horizon around 360° from the top of the Beacon Hill lookout.

Tresco's New Grimsby is visible towards the left in the middle ground, with St Mary's and St Agnes on the horizon to either side of it. Bryher is skylined beyond the conifer plantation further to the right. Tresco's King Charles' Castle stands out on the crest of heathy Castle Down, right of centre. St Martin's is visible far right, and also far left with the Eastern Isles.



Fig 72 Beacon Hill lookout, before scrub control by CAG volunteers that helped greatly with the scanning work there. (Photo courtesy of CAG leader Katharine Sawyer.)



Fig 73 Lookout used later by the coastguard, at the 1794 flag signal station on Dodman Point, one of a chain running along the south coast of Cornwall and on to the east.

Beyond the gap between the lookout and watch house is one of the stones with iron loops for stays holding a signal pole in the centre of the plot. The station on St Martin's Chapel Down, too distant to link directly to the chain, signalled to ships only. The pilots of Scilly served the information networks, taking news and mails to and from passing ships.

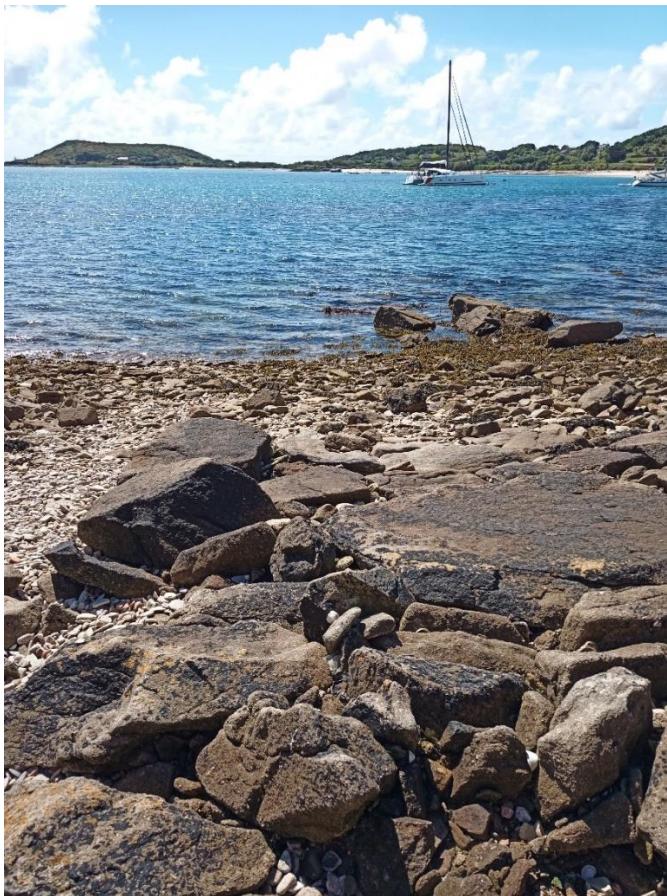


Fig 74 Looking down the slab slipway at Point, north west of the quay at New Grimsby. The slipway, made double width to serve the pair of sheds above, was still in use, like the sheds, in 1862 when it was shown in the painting appearing on the report cover.



Fig 75 Carn Near at the south end of Tresco. The hollow in the ferns left of centre, slanting down to the track to Bathinghouse Porth, marks a ruined boat shed.

The site was used to house the gigs Gleaner and Longkeel (Joby Newton, pers. comm.) and before that a Tresco Estate boat, Normandy.

3D models; Beacon Hill, Tresco

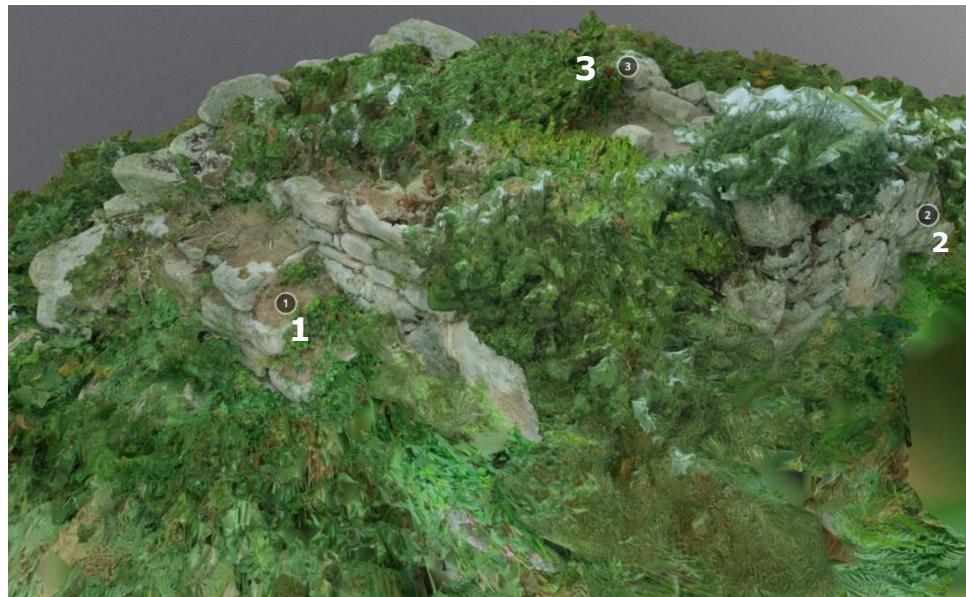


Fig 76 Model of lookout on Beacon Hill; screenshot showing steps on south east side.

(As with other models with numbered features, the notes below relate to these features.)

(1) Steps are built into the lookout, so watchers could quickly climb it on this south eastern, lee side. In the 1970s, when the vegetation was lower, some walling, perhaps part of a lean-to shelter, was seen at ground level. The platform, faced with granite slabs and filled with ram (subsoil) and rubble stone, is 2m high.

With the extra height, significantly more sea appears above Castle Down. As the 360° panorama shows, the view takes in parts of all the main islands; as well as the islets of Northwethel, St Helen's, and Teän, with Round Island and its lighthouse behind them.

Skyline sites include Telegraph, St Mary's, marked by its modern mast. The stone tower there was built before the time of the telegraph, in the early 19th century, to support a semaphore mast with wooden arms, mounted on its roof. The semaphore replaced the Napoleonic flagpole station near the Daymark on St Martin's, visible from that island's early lookout at Higher Town which, unlike this Tresco site, used a natural carn.



Fig 77 Screenshot showing drill hole on north east side of Beacon Hill lookout model.

(2) Splitting marks in several facing stones, on the north east side, show it has some roughly shaped slabs rather than simply natural 'moorstones'. CAU surveys elsewhere have found that 'broad drill marks' like this, or BDMs as they're known in Cornish archaeology, were commonly used for splitting stone, at a date later than 'wedge marks', and before 'narrow drill marks'. As some splitting marks occur in documented buildings, they can be dated, and this type is known to be generally early-mid 19th century.

One of the other BDMs here is in a stone near the base of this same revetment, so the lookout was probably extensively refurbished at some point during that period, most likely after 1822 since Woodley described the site as ruinous at that date.

The re-building of the lookout was probably done for the Preventives, or Customs and Excise Service, who had taken over the site in Woodley's day to help detect smuggling vessels, including gigs. By the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1887, which labels the site as 'Disused', smuggling on Scilly was largely suppressed.

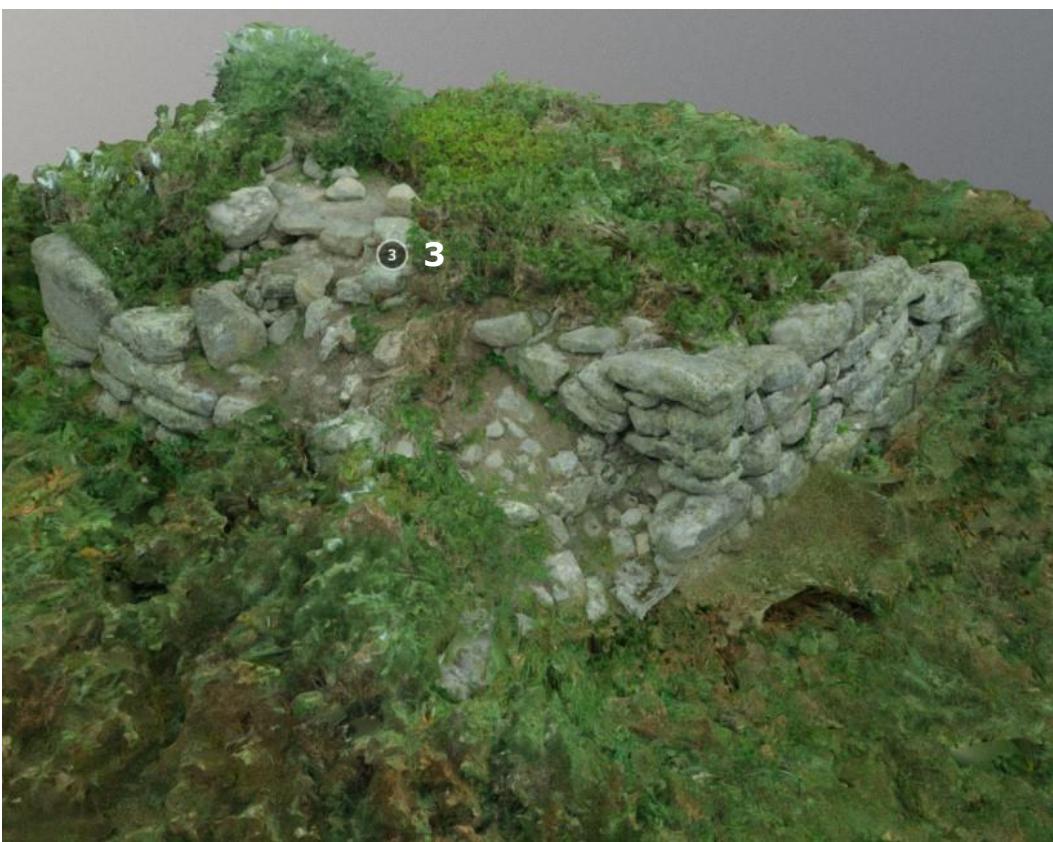


Fig 78 Beacon Hill lookout model; screenshot showing walling on top (north is to left).

(3) Walling on top of the platform is marked by two rows of stones running across it, back from the edge, towards the north side. The straighter edges of the stones are aligned, forming the opposing faces of a wall (which had a ram core, part weathered away).

The stones resemble those of the outer revetment, but rise from a tumbled part of it, and the walling is less regular than the facing. This may indicate that the wall relates to the later phase of the lookout c1822-1850, perhaps replacing its original north side to save work. When full height, it could have given shelter to the Preventives, who may also have had a roofed lean-to refuge against the platform, accessible down the steps.

Archaeology of the previous phases of the site may lie under the bushes and/or under the surface. The flagpole recorded in the mid-18th century probably had a socket set into the surface and guy hooks fixed to stones. Potentially, a pocket of distinctive soil representing the pole base could survive, if the mast decayed in place.

1.7 Signal Rock, St Martin's - Ancient and meeting place, on a rock outcrop

Signal Rock, a carn on the high ground of St Martin's at Higher Town (Fig 79), was formerly called News Rock. It was recorded in the late 18th century as -

'.... a rock, called News Rock, at which the inhabitants meet every day, in fine weather or foul, to tell and hear news' (Troutbeck 1796, 13).

As an early guidebook notes, this was formerly a pilot lookout, as well as a meeting place;

'Here is the "Rock", a prehistoric remnant: the village look-out, and in times past the favourite meeting place of the elders There is a grand outlook from here, where in the old sailing ship days vessels wanting a pilot were quickly seen' (Gibson and Sons c1932, 89-90).

The top of the Rock, fairly flat, gives enough elevation to see across this east end of St Martin's, and out to other islands and the open sea (Fig 80). It is surrounded by a green, so that the houses stand back from it. Formerly all island homes were single-storey, and trees were few, so the view will have reached even further.

The panorama from here takes in Par Beach (Higher Town Bay), and the coastal slope just above Old Quay; both of these porths were formerly bases for pilotage (Fig 81).

Old Quay with its early pier was already used by gigs in 1792 when it was marked with a shed on the Spence survey. The site was mapped in detail in 1888, when one shed had a stone slab slipway and a drang cleared through the inter-tidal rocks below (Fig 82). It is associated with the *Linnet*, one of the many historic gigs that do not survive.

Par Beach is the site of a remarkable long-lived and long-adapted row of sheds (outlined in more detail in Part 3, Site 57). The 1830 gigs still in use, *Bonnet* and *Slippen* (then called *Bernice*), were once here. The row mapped in 1888 included at least 4 sheds made for gigs, as their dimensions show. All were east of the sheds standing today (Fig 83). The western one of those still standing is a historic building, however, dating from later in the era of pilotage. There was also a gig shed further west again (thanks to Steve Walder for information). Part of its stonework is visible under the sand dunes, just across the sand slipway from the standing sheds (Fig 102).

Troutbeck in 1796 also mentions another vantage point on the high ground of St Martin's, which at that time was still in use as one of the pilots' lookouts;

'About three furlongs [or 603m] from the church N.E. is a circle of stones twenty-four feet diameter, called the Guard-house, upon high ground, where pilots meet to look out for ships; here was formerly a small house, where soldiers, in the reign of Queen Anne [1702-1714] kept watch, which is now demolished, and the materials carried off.'

The Guard House was across the island, at Turfy Hill or Flagstaff Hill (c360m rather than 603m ENE of the church). The OS map of 1888 shows its old circular base; plus a Coastguard Service lookout, with its flagstaff marked as a dot, still in use at that time. Flagstaff and Signal Rock are inter-visible (Fig 84). Messages could have been passed between them, potentially from an early period by the traditional method of 'swaysing' or waving a jacket or cap.

Signal Rock is also one of three places in the area with evidence of flag signal poles, as the 3D model shows. The third was on Chapel Down to the east, at a ruined Admiralty signal station (Fig 85). The station is now part of an extensive Scheduled Monument. It was operated before 1815, when it was superseded by a semaphore mast at the Telegraph tower on St Mary's.

There is no record of a flagstaff at Signal Rock on the OS maps of 1888 and 1906. A painting of the site c1836-1881 (part of a heritage display nearby in the Sunday School of the Chapel) does not show one (Fig 86). There may have been an early pilot signal mast here, like that documented at Beacon Hill, Tresco, that had come and gone before the middle decades of the 19th century – or a short-lived Coastguard staff, either of that time or shortly after 1906 as it wasn't mentioned in 1932.



Fig 79 Signal Rock, formerly called News Rock, in the green at Higher Town by the road to St Martin's main quay.



Fig 80 View from Signal Rock. The Daymark of 1683 is visible on the skyline, above the chimney of one of the houses set back from the green, Hillside (mapped in 1792).

The Daymark was given stripes in 1830 after a wreck occurred when it was tragically mistaken for the contemporary St Agnes' lighthouse which reaches a similar height OD.



Fig 81 Panorama to east and south seen from Signal Rock (St Mary's in the distance to the right).

Gigs were kept on the porths below, either side of Cruther's or (Gullis) Hill (right). Higher Town Bay, or Par Beach, is to the east of the hill and of the modern quay (to the left in this view). Old Quay is below the other side of the hill (right of the pole in the foreground).



Fig 82 Re-roofed shed with paved slip to the north in the group at St Martin's Old Quay.

The maps of 1792 and 1888, and the archaeological remains of walls, indicate half a dozen gig sheds in all at Old Quay, some relating to different phases of building and use.



Fig 83 Gig sheds at Par Beach, St Martin's. The nearest is a pilot gig shed of c1900; the next, the more recent shed of the 2001 gig Galatea, and the third is another modern shed housing the Dolphin of 1969 (replacing a shorter shed of c1900).

There were formerly other sheds, to either side; the largest ever gig, Queen, is still recalled as having been housed just left (east) of these standing ones (Steve Walder, pers. comm.), and the 1888 map shows a shed there 34 feet long, no longer standing.



Fig 84 Fixings of stays for a Victorian coastguard lookout pole, Flagstaff, St Martin's. The stones used are potentially from a recorded earlier military watch house. Watchers here and at Signal Rock (arrowed) could have exchanged messages across the island.



Fig 85 Napoleonic signal station at Chapel Down at the east end of St Martin's, with ruins of lodgings and stores including for the signal flags.

The pointy rock seen in the distance beyond, Hanague, is one of many outlying rocks on the east and west of Scilly where gigs repeatedly attended shipwrecks in the past.



Fig 86 Signal Rock or News Rock c1836-1881, as shown in a painting included in a display of images of island heritage at the Sunday School extension to the Chapel on the left. Reproduced thanks to St Martin's Methodist Church members and to Mandy Williams.

3D models; Signal Rock, St Martin's



Fig 87 Signal Rock model screenshot showing the north side featuring a vertical slot.

(As with other models with numbered features, the notes below relate to these features.)

(1) A feature in the face of the carn, on the north side less often exposed to gales, appears to be an old cut. This is a vertical, regular groove running down from the top, near the centre. It passes through several natural layers of rock, crossing the joint between them, to end at a small ledge below. On sunny days it is picked out clearly when the light catches it from one side.

In view of the name Signal Rock, this is interpreted as a slot made to allow a flag staff to stand on the ledge half way down the rock. The carn would then have helped to raise and support the pole, and to shelter an operator of the signal who could have stood in the lee of it.

If a staff was fitted here, it may have been a re-used timber from a ship, salvaged from the shore or from a wreck. Wreck timber was traditionally used for all purposes requiring wood in buildings on Scilly, where ceiling beams are often round- or half-round in section, indicating use of ships' masts or spars similar in breadth to this slot.

(2) Drill holes suitable for fixings (rather than for splitting) are visible on the Rock, at least two on the north side and two on the top. In places their edges appear slightly faceted rather than round, perhaps because they are the result of a particular style of hand drilling.

The hole on the uppermost slab of the rock, at (2), has rusty remains of an iron fixture inside it. It is likely that this was a loop or hook used for securing a cable, to serve, along with more irons once fixed in the other holes, as a stay for a signal staff held against the north face of the carn. Well-preserved ironwork of this kind survives still fixed on a rock at the Coastguard lookout of at Flagstaff Hill on the other side of St Martin's (Fig 84).

Iron was wrought at Hugh Town, for use on Scilly and on the ships that were built and supplied here on a large scale in Victorian times. The OS maps of 1887 and 1906 show a smithy beside Town Beach at the east end of Thoroughfare (with a double gig shed beside it, noted as Site 11 in Part 3 of this report), where Golden Bay Mansions now stands.

(3) Two pairs of initials, FN and RE, are cut in the Rock at this point, though they are not clear on the 3D model (due to light conditions; much of the project's scanning work happened to take place in bad weather, while the survey days were fine!). As granite is not easily cut, the lettering may be a reflection of time spent on watch here.

A small watch house stands at roughly the same height on the north east coast of St Mary's at Mount Todden, within a Scheduled battery of the Civil War. This was used in watching the east approach to Scilly in times of danger, which will have been another function served by St Martin's Signal Rock from the deep past. The flat roof at Mount Todden, made of lintels capped with turf for disguise like the islands' Second World War 'pillboxes', offers a lookout platform similar to Signal Rock's.

A massive rock slab forms one wall of the Mount Todden watch house. Inside, carved on the slab, are initials, dates, a flag, and other graffiti, made in phases from Napoleonic times to the Great War of the 20th century. A shallow ledge, perhaps trimmed for the purpose, is just large enough to hold a small light.



Fig 88 Screenshot of the south side of the Signal Rock model facing Higher Town Bay.

(As with other models, the notes below relate to the numbered feature shown.)

(4) The top of the Rock is not readily accessible. The south west corner has a sloping shelf cut into it (with a drilled hole near its south end). This is rather too wide and sloping to be an early step, is not worn, and doesn't apparently lead on to a higher platform or more steps. It was probably cut to obtain a piece of stone.

The painting of the site as seen from the south, made before 1881 (Fig 86), shows other, lower rock outcrops on the Green. Moorstones obtained from here are likely to have been used as material for the building of the nearby Chapel in 1822, its re-building in 1836, and its Sunday School extension in 1881. There is bedrock beside Signal Rock at ground level, on the north; possibly it once rose higher and had a natural shape or cut footholds that could be used in climbing up the carn.

Moorstones may also have been used to sit and study the view, like the wooden bench today. Some Cornish harbours have walls or rock ledges at vantage points, once used as seats by neighbourhood groups. Both seats and groups had a dialect name, 'gow'.

2 Gig shed archaeology in contrasting places; Hugh Town, and the uninhabited island of Samson

2.1 Hugh Town; traces of dozens of historic gigs

St Mary's Pool

Gigs recorded as once kept at Town Beach are *Cuckoo*, *Hound*, *Klondyke*, *Leo*, *Lloyd's Green*, *Lloyd's White*, *Palace*, *Prince*, *St Vincent*, and *Topsy* (Jenkins 1975, 59-68). *Topsy* was kept under the coastguard house on Thoroughfare, since altered to accommodation (*op cit*, 68). *Klondyke* was sold on to St Agnes, where the walls of each of two sheds she was kept in at different times still remain (Part 3, Sites 28 and 29). She was later presented to the Museum in Hugh Town; this is now closed, but it is currently planned to restore and display the gig as part of a new museum and cultural centre.

A shed where Golden Bay now stands, mapped in 1862 and 1887, is remembered with its red tile roof by Alfred Trehearne who played there as a boy in the 1940s (pers. comm.). As it seems to have been built as a double shed, and was in a central location, it may have been used for the two gigs kept by Lloyd's, the London shipping insurers. The gig *Lloyd's Green* appears in the Eastern Isles in a photo of 1872 (Part 4, and Fig 106).

The Mermaid and Atlantic Slips will have been used for gigs from the 17th century, when Bank, the core of Hugh Town, grew between them after the founding of the quay and Star Castle. The Atlantic Slip (and the hotel alongside) are named for the 1844 pilot cutter *Atlantic* based there. The gig *St Vincent*, one of two that worked with *Atlantic*, was kept by the slip (Jenkins 1975, 32, 67), possibly on its north side (Site 9 in Part 3).

The Peters gig *Palace* was owned by the Banfields, the St Mary's shipping family (Jenkins 1975, 67; Larn and Banfield 2013, 10). The yard behind their home, Strand House, has walling indicative of a shed, and a wide opening to Town Beach for the gig (Fig 89).

Leo was the last working pilot gig to be built on Scilly, made by Tiddys in the late 19th century, and last recorded as owned by a W. Rogers (Jenkins 1975, 64). With O&M, and also St Mary's lifeboat, *Leo* went out to assist the ship *Queen Mab* in 1903 (*ibid*, and Harris 1994, 118, 170). The gig was kept in a shed just east of the Rechabite slip, above which was the meeting room of the Rechabites, a working mens' society (Alfred Trehearne, pers comm.). The shed appears on the 1862 map, so is earlier in origin and probably housed one or more other gig/s before *Leo*. Traces of the base of the shed can be seen in variations in the walling of the sea front beside the slip (Fig 90).

Porth Cressa

Gigs recorded here are *A&B*, *Black Lloyd's*, *Dart*, *Dolly Varden*, *Hope* (the first of two gigs of this name) *Juno*, *Mistletoe*, and *Sulton* (Jenkins 1975). The site of a shed mapped in 1887, levelled but still open ground, lies at Porthcressa Bank (Fig 91).

Hope and *Sulton* (or *Sultan*) were housed in a double shed replaced by the Porthcressa Café, now housing, at the west end of Porthcressa Bank. *A&B*, owned by the Banfields, shipping agents, was swept from her shed and smashed on a wall in a gale (Jenkins 1975, 56). From the distance given (50 yards) it appears *A&B* may have been in one of two gig sheds at the Tourist Information Centre site (developed previously, in 1977). *Mistletoe*'s house was beside *Dolly Varden*'s, at the site where the 'Sibley building' now stands.

Dolly Varden's house is a remarkable survival, still standing and roofed albeit with later sheeting (Fig 92). It is next to the Fire Station, which is now Dibble and Grubb (Jenkins 1975, 60; Leung 2020, 12). The gig, built by Peters in 1873, worked with the cutter *Presto*. She was painted creamy yellow (Jenkins 1975, 60-61).

Outlying sites

Gigs were also kept of the outskirts of Hugh Town. On Newford Island, an earthwork marks where a gig-sized shed stood; it was mapped as a building in 1887 (Fig 93). Gigs may have used a slipway on the shore at Porth Cressa Brow, now left stranded by coastal erosion, although this could have had other functions (Part 3, Site 1, and Fig 94).



Fig 89 Opening to Town Beach from Strand House yard used to keep the gig Palace.



Fig 90 Site of the shed used for the gig Leo by the Rechabite Slip, seen in the sea wall.

The Rechabite slip was also used for ships built in yards in this area. In the 18th century, these were in the formerly open ground called Tommy's Field between Back Lane and Church Street, reached by Wellcross Lane aligned with this slip. In the 19th century they were centred on the green to the right of this view, named Holgates after a later hotel.



Fig 91 Porthcressa Bank, containing (near the outdoor furniture) the site of a gig shed mapped in 1887 and 1906, likely to have left remains now buried in the sandy bank.



Fig 92 Shed of the 1873 Peters-built gig Dolly Varden (left). The shed was mapped in 1862, 1887 and 1906, so had been used for other gigs before Dolly Varden's time.



Fig 93 Newford Island, earthwork of a gig-sized structure mapped in 1887 (1m scale).



Fig 94 The mouth of a paved slip, with the base of sea front walling flanking it, at Porthcressa Brow, where the low cliff of ram (periglacial head) is continually eroding.

2.2 Samson; discoveries from excavation of an early gig shed

Samson, uninhabited since c1850, is an archaeological landscape rich in prehistoric and post-medieval remains, and the whole island is now a Scheduled Monument. Sites include two gig sheds on the 'Neck' between its two hills, shown on an estate plan of c1830.

On the East Porth side, the map of c1830 shows a gig shed held by the Woodcock family. The 1888 map shows a possible associated drang below. In 2007 a site was identified as the remains of this shed dismantled in the past (Johns, Berry and Mulville 2013, 23).

On the West Porth side, the c1830 survey records the Webber family's gig shed. This was excavated by Cardiff University in 1977, along with a ruined cottage and its midden mound nearby (Mason 1983) (Figs 95 and 96). Its site can be found more easily in the blown sand and low scrub, as it lies just 6m west of the cottage ruins, still 2m high.

This West Porth shed was 10.5m long by 3.1m. Its floor was sand, although the depth to which it was tested is not clear. The gig doorway was on the west. The shed was narrower there. This was attributed to a sand dune displacing the front end of the north side. However, as the walling there still had its facing stones it could have been slightly curving originally like the walls of the boat-shaped sheds at New Quay, St Mary's.

The excavator noted that the c1830 survey refers to this shed as having two rooms. He found the base of a small square lean-to against its east end, seemingly an early store for gear linked to the use of the gig. A small door to the shed, near the east end of the south side, would have made it quicker to get between shed and the store.

The cottage was made in traditional style, to a plan used on Scilly for smaller dwellings, with one room which would have had a loft. It had a slab-built fireplace, a 'keeping-place' built into the wall, a corner doorway, one window where there were fragments of glass, a floor mostly of ram (subsoil) with a fan of paving slabs laid in front of the hearth, and a thatched roof which had fallen and decayed leaving organic debris.

The cottage on the Neck is remote from the small farmsteads of the Woodcocks, Webbers and other people of Samson, on South Hill. It seems most likely that it was sited here for the occupant/s to use the gig shed, just a few strides away, for their livelihood. The c1830 map does not show the cottage, but its midden contained a silver coin of 1838, two thirds of the way down, and clay pipes dated to c1820-1840.

Material found in the midden was almost all derived from the sea; limpets and other shells, traces of crab, bones of seals, wrasse, and gulls or other birds. One species of mollusc found only occurs on the holdfast or stalk of kelp. Possibly a gig here was used in fishing, or kelping although that trade was in decline in the early 19th century.

A Preventive boat was stationed on Samson by 1817. One of its boatmen, walking on the beach, was 'feloniously fired at by some Person or Persons unknown, then in a boat [potentially a gig] off the said Island' (*Royal Cornwall Gazette* December 20 1817, 3).

The Preventives may have used the cottage and gig shed at that time, if the cottage existed before the c1830 survey and was omitted from it perhaps because it was not then rented out by the Duchy. Outlying bases were usual in Cornwall for the early establishment of the Preventives and the Coastguards initially charged with control of smuggling. Artefacts from the midden included brass buttons, and squared flints for a flintlock gun, possibly an official issue although it could have been a fowling piece.

Other remarkable finds from the midden include half a dozen sky-blue glass beads of Roman times, some 2,000 years old (c100-200 AD). Someone had found and kept these beads, before they became buried again – a glimpse perhaps of the interests of a boatman 200 years ago.

East of the cottage on the Neck, photos of the early 1900s show thatched ricks of turf and ferns (peat and bracken), then still harvested here for use as fuel and animal bedding on other islands. The ricks were longer than the cottage, as may have been general on Scilly (a large platform on Tresco may have been for ricks; Part 1.6). A fern rick here on the Neck was used in 1871 by the crew of the *Albion*, to shield from the gale two men they'd rescued from the wreck of the *Delaware*, while signalling for a second gig so they could leave *Albion* at West Porth and pull the men home to Bryher (Part 1.5).



Fig 95 Gig shed (foreground) and isolated cottage both recorded c1830, on the West Porth side of the Neck of Samson. Photo of 2005 by Eric Berry for CAU.

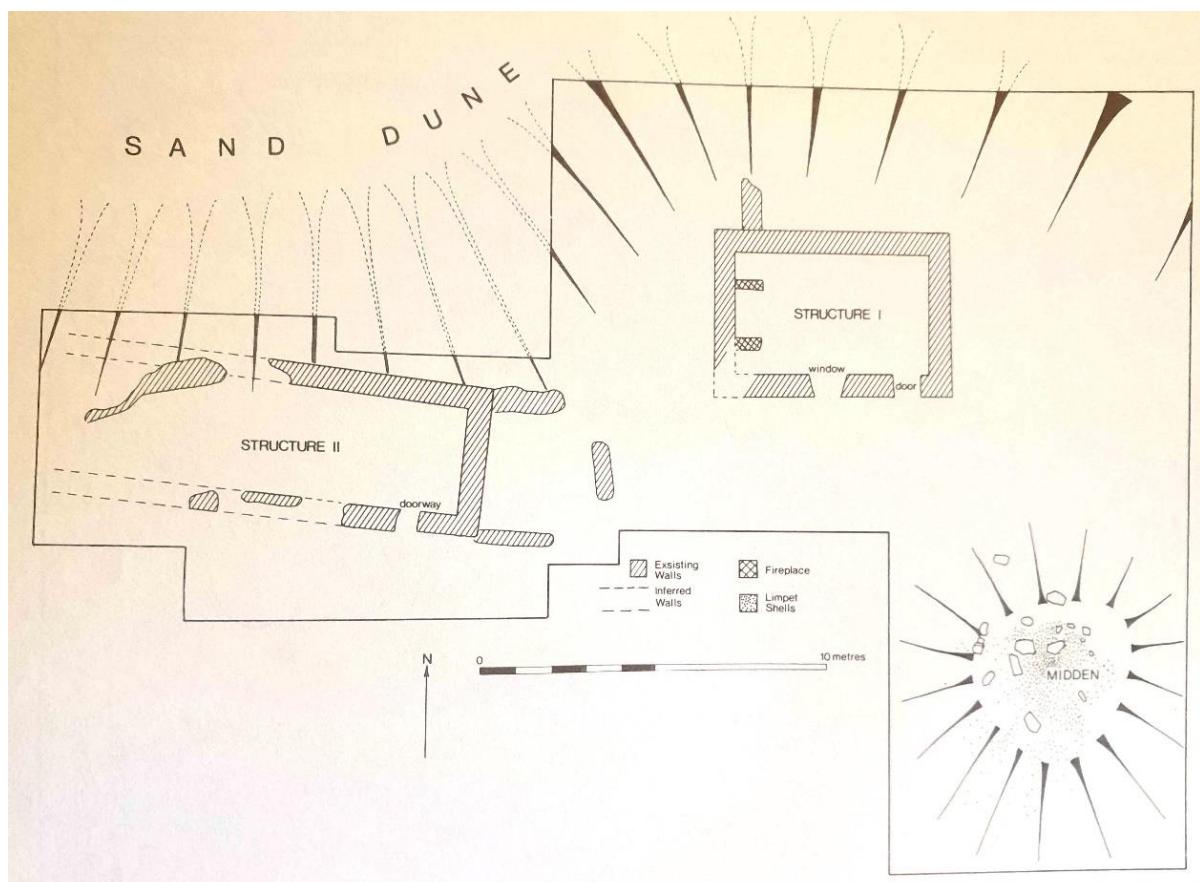


Fig 96 Plan of the site at West Porth, Samson, excavated in 1977. (After Mason 1983, figure 4; thanks to publisher the University of Exeter's Institute of Cornish Studies.)

3 Coastal archaeology of the pilot gigs on Scilly;

Summary Table of Sites

Notes: Site numbers (in clockwise sequence) can be used to refer to the location maps (Figs 111-116). Figures 97-102, 105, and 107 show some of the wide range of remains.

Dates are given in abbreviated form, for example 19C is used for 19th century.

Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record (CSHER), Listed Building (LB), and Scheduled Monument (SM) reference numbers are given where relevant.

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
Hugh Town, St Mary's; Porthcressa side			
1 Porth Cressa Brow SV 90600 10160 (Slipway, approx.) CSHER 31130	Slipway Mooring ring	A ruined slipway, and footings of sea walls of several phases, lie on the east side of Porth Cressa (Fig 94). The slip appears just wide enough for a gig, or punt, or pack animal, to pass (less than 2m across at least in part). More recently, perhaps in the 19C, a gig mooring ring was fixed to a rock in the vicinity (Alfred Trenear, pers. comm.). There is potential for further recording of the slipway, and the exact spot of the mooring ring.	The slipway has paving of well fitted irregular sized slabs and could be 17C or 18C. Fishing boats as well as gigs might have been worked here; part of the Brow below is named Pilchard Pool on the 1887 map. In 1988 the slip was c9m out from the low cliff (Ratcliffe and Sharpe 1990, 60). It is now twice that far to the cliff. The mooring nearby was used for keeping a 5-oared gig by Mr Trenear's grandfather, who took the islands' leading photographer Alexander Gibson out in the gig to the wreck of the <i>Minnehaha</i> in 1910. The resulting photos include that of the gig <i>Czar</i> swimming cattle from the ship to safety, Fig 58 in this report.
2 Porth Cressa Bank (west) SV 90285 10463 (approx.)	Gig shed (double; former site)	The shed is not shown on the 1887 or 1906 maps. It appears on some old photos, so was apparently made after 1906 (to house gigs which were of earlier origin). The site was later used for a Beach Café and more recently adapted as a house.	The shed housed the gigs <i>Hope</i> and <i>Sulton</i> (before <i>Sulton</i> was sold to St Martin's) (Jenkins 1975, 64 and 68). <i>Hope</i> , built by Tiddy on Scilly in the mid-19C, is considered to be the last gig rowed across to France for smuggling (<i>op cit</i>). At that time she was presumably kept elsewhere as the shed here was 20C in origin.
3 Porth Cressa Bank (west of path across bank) SV 90310 10470	Gig shed (buried site)	A shed here was built after 1862, but before 1887, as the old maps show. The site is west of a surfaced path running across the bank (Fig 91).	The shed was dismantled in the 20C but the site may be undisturbed below the ground surface. There is potential for survival of the base of the shed.

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
4 Porth Cressa (TIC/Schiller Shelter site) SV 90357 10458 & SV 90365 10458	2 Gig sheds (2, former sites)	Two sheds stood here in 1862, 1887 and 1906. They survived into living memory (Alfred Trehearne, pers. comm.). The site was used in 1977 for a shelter with toilets, now replaced by the Tourist Information Centre.	The gig <i>A&B</i> , owned by the Banfields, shipping agents, was swept 50 yards from her shed in a gale, and smashed on a wall by Porthcressa Road (Jenkins 1975, 56). In view of the distance involved, possibly <i>A&B</i> was in one of these two gig sheds (or she may have been in one to the east at Site 6).
5 Porth Cressa (central) SV 90400 10445	2 Gig sheds (2, buried or former sites)	The 1862 map shows a pair of sheds here, close together but separate. The sheds had gone before 1887.	The site has been modified in front by the modern sea defence and walkway structure, but it is not redeveloped; so there may be potential for survival of some trace of the sheds.
6 Porth Cressa (seaward of Fairways) SV 90440 10435	Gig shed (buried or former site)	The 1862 map shows a long shed here. The 1887 and 1906 maps show it gig-shed size, seemingly rather shorter than before. The building has gone. The front of the site, at least, has been partly altered by the modern sea front.	(See comment on <i>A&B</i> under the entry for Site 4 above.)
7 Porth Cressa ('Sibley Building' site) SV 90465 10430	Gig shed (former site)	The site of a shed mapped in 1862, 1887 and 1906, now re-developed.	The <i>Mistletoe</i> was kept here, 'next to Dolly Varden' (Site 8), probably before the mid-20C. The gig was built on Scilly by Downing Williams. She was owned by a private boatman, Mr Tonkin, and was painted green (Jenkins 1975, 64).
8 Porth Cressa (west of Old Fire Station/Dibble and Grubb) SV 90471 10428	Gig shed	This shed, mapped in 1862, 1887 and 1906, still stands (Fig 92). It was re-roofed in the 20C. The seaward end is now walled in, but has doors in a photo in the Isles of Scilly Museum archive. Another photo, dated to 1870 (Larn and Banfield 2013, 27), shows a low store against its east side, gone by 1887.	This was the shed of the yellow gig <i>Dolly Varden</i> built in 1873 by Peters, used together with the pilot cutter <i>Presto</i> . In 1909, at the wreck of the <i>Plympton</i> on Lethegus Ledge, one of her crew was tragically lost (Jenkins 1975, 60). The gig is recorded as having been racing in 1934 (see further Part 4 of this report).

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
Hugh Town, St Mary's; St Mary's Pool side			
9 Atlantic Slip SV 90187 10646	Gig shed (ruined or former site)	The 1887 map shows a building of gig size on the south side of a rear yard, along the north side of the slip. Possibly this was the site of the gig shed. Some walling might perhaps remain.	The gig <i>St Vincent</i> was one of two that worked with the pilot cutter <i>Atlantic</i> . The gig is known to have been kept 'on Customs House Slip' (Jenkins 1975, 32, 67). That was the former name of the Atlantic Slip, as the 1887 map indicates.
10 Thorough-fare (west) SV 90275 10581 (approx.)	Gig shed (the site is now flats; walling still remains)	The coastguard gig <i>Topsy</i> was kept 'below the coastguard house' (now Watch House) (Jenkins 1975, 68).	This harbourside back street, close to the core of Hugh Town, seems to have been one of the areas used to house gigs used on official maritime business.
11 Thorough-fare (east); present day site of Golden Bay Mansions SV 90350 10570	Gig sheds (double, former site)	Mr Alfred Trehearne recalls two gig sheds here. They had doors at their inland ends and red tile roofs. It seems they were built as a double, as the 1862 and 1887 maps show a square structure at the site.	Two of the 3 gigs operated by the Lloyd's shipping insurers, <i>Lloyd's Green</i> (Fig 106) and <i>White</i> , were based on Town Beach (Jenkins 1975, 64). Possibly they were based here, as this site appears to have had a double shed built as one. They presumably faced inland to avoid wind and blown sand.
12 Strand House) SV 90388 10584 (Gig gateway)	Gig shed (possible site) Gig gateway	The yard to a private house has a broad gateway arch on the beach to admit a gig; walling inside is potentially part of a gig shed (Fig 89).	Strand House was the home of the Banfield shipping agency family (Jenkins 1975, 67; Larn and Banfield 2013, 10). Their gig <i>Palace</i> was kept here, and was used to attend ships at anchor in the roads.
13 Rechabite Slip (west of) SV 90480 10605	Gig shed (possible site)	A shed here, once an English Heritage store, was of gig shed size (Chris Evans, pers. comm.).	This may have been a gig shed. It was dismantled later in the 20C, and there are unlikely to be any remains as the ground has been re-surfaced.
14 Rechabite Slip (east of) SV 90495 10614	Gig shed (remains of base)	The gig <i>Leo</i> was kept here (Alfred Trehearne, pers. comm.) <i>Leo</i> was built by Tiddy in the late 19C (Jenkins 1975, 67). The 1862 map shows the shed, so it had previously housed other gig/s. Traces of the base of the shed remain in the sea wall (Fig 90).	<i>Leo</i> was the last working pilot gig built on Scilly. In 1903 <i>Leo</i> , and <i>O&M</i> , worked with the St Mary's lifeboat, to save the ship <i>Queen Mab</i> (Harris 1994, 118, 170). The loft of the Rechabite society for working men, above the shed, was one of the main meeting-places for boatmen. The slip was also used to launch ships built in the area.

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
<i>St Mary's, beyond Hugh Town</i>			
15 Porth Mellon SV 90825 10730 CSHER 64429	Gig sheds (3, large capacity)	The 1888 and 1906 maps do not record any gig sheds on Porth Mellon. The existing complex of stone clad sheds, forming a centre for WPGC and other gig events, was established in the later 20C by the Duchy of Cornwall.	This was an important early landing, where water was supplied to ships from Moor Well nearby. Any early sheds may have been overcome by blown sand and buried in dunes. In living memory, <i>Slippen</i> was kept at Porth Mellon to take pupils living on the off-islands to and from school (Alison Clough, pers. comm.).
16 Porth Mellon SV 90866 10920 CSHER 31152 SM 1015668	Smugglers' cache	An underground tunnel, lined and roofed with stone. It opens from a ledge on the low cliff, and also from the clifftop behind. The ledge may represent a former part of the structure, opened up by erosion.	A type of site made in large numbers, but well-hidden, so rarely re-discovered! In 1829 the masters of Scilly's <i>Challenger</i> , <i>Champion</i> , <i>Defiance</i> , <i>Hope</i> and <i>Lion</i> petitioned for 8 men to be allowed in a boat, in response to HM Customs and Excise limiting the number to 4 to counter the smugglers (Jenkins 1975, 16).
17 Newford Island SV 90734 11219 (Gig shed)	Gig shed Slipway Small ruined quay	A gig size building was mapped here in 1887 but had gone by 1906. It is now a low earthwork c11m by 6m externally (Fig 93).	The site lies on the same islet as a Civil War breastwork and battery SM 1015667 and could be 17C or 18C. The slipway appears to have been modified in the 20C.
18 Pendrathen Quay SV 91213 12687 (Gig shed)	Gig shed (1 double, and c3 single) Quay Slipway Drang	This landing place, stony but strategic, has infrastructure of several phases dating from at least as early as c1759 (Troutbeck 1796, 100-101). The 1887 map shows a double shed and 3 others, as well as the pier, slip, and drang. Sheds and other features remain, part modified for later use. One gig shed, now known as Norman's Shed, was re-roofed for a shorter boat before 1906 (Fig 23).	Tracks run to a hilltop lookout recorded in 1715 and to the early 19C signal tower at Telegraph LB 1141182 . The old gigs <i>Boot</i> , <i>Chance</i> , <i>Railway</i> , <i>Whaler</i> and <i>Bee</i> were kept here (Jenkins 1975, 56, 57, 67, 69; Gillis 1978, 19). Archaeological remains of part of an old pilot gig, considered likely to be <i>Bee</i> , have now been discovered on St Agnes! (Part 1.1, and Fig 20). The 1971 racing gig <i>Nornour</i> was also kept here before the Porth Mellon sheds were built (Andrew King, pers. comm.) (see also Part 1.1)

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
19 Innisidgen SV 92143 12715 (Gig shed) Shed is in SM 1013271 CSHER 30698 (Drang)	Gig shed (ruined) Slipway Drang	The drang was photographed in 1990 by CAU (Ratcliffe and Sharpe 1990, 60; site 7691). A gig sized earthwork, to which the drang points, was found during fieldwork for the present project in 2025 (Fig 30).	The project surveys indicate that the earthwork here is potentially one of the earliest gig sheds still visible (17C/18C). The drang has kelping ways to either side, which branch off it so are apparently secondary. See Part 1.2 for survey results.
20 Watermill Cove SV 92348 12228 (Gig shed)	Gig shed Drang	The 1887 map shows a 'Boat House', not evident at present, and a drang possibly now covered in sand.	As elsewhere, the gig shed was linked to hamlets which lay behind the coast for security – an early lane runs from here to Newford and Lenteverne.
21 New Quay SV 92716 12168 (Gig sheds) Part of the complex lies in the edge of SM 1015662 CSHER 43408 (Drang)	Gig sheds (5, or 6 – one of the smaller sheds may have been truncated) Smaller boat sheds (2, or 3) Slipway Drang	A chart of 1735 marks New Quay; the 1792 map shows it with a gig shed. The 1887 map shows the layout largely as it is today. The gig sheds mostly survive to eaves level; a few are partly re-roofed (Fig 35). The slip and massive drang are maintained in use (Figs 37, 38).	These are well-preserved though roofless sheds, showing their early forms and character, evidence of dating and time-depth, and their reliance on the monumental drang. Gigs kept here include <i>Elaine</i> (John Williams, pers. comm.) and <i>Franklin</i> (Jenkins 1978, 61). See Part 1.3 for survey results, and interpretations such as a possible namesake of 1848–1854 for the gig <i>Franklin</i> .
22 Porth Hellick (Carn Nore) SV 92665 10578 (Gig shed) CSHER 41980 (Slipway)	Gig shed Slipway Drang	A gig shed, slightly narrower at the back end, with a long slipway and a long drang, mapped in 1887 (Fig 97). The shed has been re-roofed for a shorter boat.	This shed's drang runs out to Shrimp Rock. Beyond that is a separate outer drang, which will have served both this shed and Site 23. These drangs show that even long, shoal, rocky inlets, like Porth Hellick, could be adapted to be used by gigs at all states of tide.
23 Porth Hellick (Salakee Down side) SV 92533 10415 (Gig shed)	Gig shed Drang	A drang mapped here in 1887 is still clear; it is c6m wide. A hollow above it, the width of a gig but shorter, may be a gig shed partly eroded away by the sea (Fig 33).	If the hollow on the cliff is a gig shed, it is likely to be early as it is not shown on the old maps. An outer drang, linking the whole hourglass-shaped porth with the open sea, serves both this site and Site 22 (above).
24 Old Town Harbour SV 91140 10080 (Gig shed)	Gig shed (former or buried site)	A bench now marks the seaward end of the site of a gig shed mapped in 1888 (with some smaller sheds adjoining) and 1906.	The site of the shed of the <i>Old Town Gig</i> lost off Peninnis in 1821 (Jenkins 1975, 65). It is by the ruined early harbour (SM 1015656).

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
25 Old Town Bay SV 91140 10080 (Gig shed; approx.)	Drang Gig shed (possible former site)	Inter-tidal ways here were mapped in 1887. Most run along the shore and twist and expand in places, so may have been for gathering seaweed. One runs straight and ends near the church, so may mark an early landing and/or gig shed site.	Even after Hugh Town eclipsed Old Town, in the 17C, the church here (LB 1141210) retained considerable importance. People came here [no doubt in gigs] for the chaplain of the Godolphins, lords of Scilly, to baptise their children, before ministries were established on the off-islands (Troutbeck 1796, 64).
26 Carn Leh SV 91260 09885 (Gig shed; approx.)	Gig shed (possibly 2 or more) Slipway Drang	The 1887 map shows a drang, and sheds recorded as used for farming. Traces of a slip, and of building platforms, indicate former use for gigs.	The slip, just visible under shifting beach stone in 2024, illustrates the potential for finding more gig archaeology (Fig 98). Any sheds here could possibly date from before the decline of Old Town in the 17C.
St Agnes			
27 Perconger (or Porth Conger) SV 88390 08520	Drang	The map of 1792 shows the Perconger drang (or trackway, the term used on St Agnes at present) marked 'Lake'.	The 1792 map does not show any structures at Perconger at that time. Possibly there were sheds that had used the drang but were then disused and were later renewed.
28 Perconger (or Porth Conger); south east of the <i>Turk's Head</i> SV 88388 08457	Gig shed (ruin)	The 1888 map shows a roofless shed here. The 1906 map seems to show it was opened up to plot in front. If so, it was repaired, as it was used in living memory. Cuts in the slope, with stone facing, that form the west and south sides, survive well (Fig 17).	The shed was used for the 1877 <i>Klondyke</i> (Marigold Hicks, pers. comm.) also associated with Site 29. This gig still survives, in the care of Scilly's Museum (currently closed). She was built by Gluyas' yard, now part of Holgates Green (Fig 15). On St Agnes she was used for pilotage and then lighthouse work (Jenkins 1975, 64; Gillis 1975, 8).
29 Perconger (or Porth Conger); east south east of the <i>Turk's Head</i> SV 88394 08466	Gig shed (ruin) Slipway	The 1888 and 1906 maps show a shed in use here. Its walls are near intact (Fig 17). The 1906 map shows the slip north of the shed, not mapped in 1888 so seemingly added c1900. The shed appears to be older than the ramp to the shed of the <i>Shah</i> (Site 30).	The unusual evidence for a secondary slip seems to show that the coastguards' use of the par gained precedence. In an old photo displayed at the 2021 gig heritage weekend at Porthmellon, this shed has a gig in it, named in the 2021 display as <i>Klondyke</i> (see also Site 28). This shed was also used to distribute post for St Agnes (Johann Hicks, pers. comm.).

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
30 Perconger (or Porth Conger); <i>Shah</i> Shed SV 88404 08455	Gig shed	The 1888 and 1906 maps show a gig shed here. It was rebuilt, in traditional form and style, in the 20C, and houses the <i>Shah</i> (Fig 17).	<i>Shah</i> , bought from Peters' in 1873, was first at Cove Vean (Site 33) (Jenkins 1975,67). The access ramp to the front of shed seems to respect the shed below at Site 30 (now roofless) so would be later in origin.
31 Perconger (or Porth Conger); east of <i>Shah</i> Shed SV 88425 08444	Gig shed (base of)	A platform on the clifftop here is the base of the iron shed of the <i>Gypsy</i> (Johann Hicks, pers. comm.). <i>Gypsy</i> came here in 1931 from Little Cove (Site 34) (Patrick Bird, pers. comm.).	<i>Gypsy</i> was the last gig to put a pilot on a ship, in 1938. The pilot was Trinity pilot Jack Hicks of St Agnes, and the ship was the <i>Foremost</i> . <i>Gypsy</i> was later sold to Padstow. Sadly, she ended up being burned there in 1964 (Jenkins 1975, 61-62).
32 Dropnose Porth, Gugh SV 89150 08260 (Gig shed)	Gig shed (possible site) Drang Mooring ring	The 1888 map shows a drang, south of the central rocks, visible in places. A dip in the cliff, as wide as a gig but shorter, may be an old shed (Fig 99). There is a mooring ring nearby (Tristan Hick and Adrian Pearce, pers. comms.)	There is no tradition of a gig on Gugh, but the site could have been useful for one in some conditions (Tristan Hick, pers. comm.). The 1888 map shows the track to Higher Town, very similar in length to that from Higher Town to the gig sheds at Peraskin (half a mile).
33 Cove Vean (north) SV 88450 08100 (Gig shed)	Gig shed (Double) Drang	The 1888 map depicts a roofed 'Boat House' here, and a ruined one a shed's width to its south. By 1906 the north shed was doubled, taking up the former gap on its south. The shed has been restored with a new roof line and covering.	<i>Shah</i> was kept here after she was bought from St Ives in 1873 (Jenkins 1875, 67). The shed was doubled in 1895 to house the <i>Campernell</i> (Harris 1994, 140), still kept here – now with the <i>Sussex</i> formerly kept on Bryher (at Site 41). <i>Campernell</i> is a capacious gig whose stern seat could be removed to make space for a coffin (Jenkins 1975, 58).
34 Little Cove (also known as Hole of Cove Vean) SV 88512 07952 (Gig shed) CSHER 30673	Gig shed (Double) Slipway Drang Piers (2; former site)	The 1792 map shows a small haven, maybe the 'Hole' of the old name. The 1888 map marks the shed, and the sides of the drang (or haven). The sheds' walls and paved slip survive (Ratcliffe and Sharpe 1990, 50). <i>Gypsy</i> was kept here (see also Site 31).	The mapping of a harbour here may mean the drang was made from one, or, mistaken for one. As the 1888 map shows the north shed, slightly shorter, was built on to the south one. The south shed, being roofed at the time, housed <i>Gypsy</i> in 1887 when (with the gig O&M) she 'swam' 450 cattle to Annet from the wreck of the <i>Castleford</i> steamer (Jenkins 1975, 61). (Compare Fig 58.)

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
35 Peraskin (or Porth Askin on maps) SV 88229 07427 (north gig shed) SM 1009280 <i>Gig shed on north, and</i> SM 1009281 <i>Double shed</i> CSHER 31115, 73536	Gig sheds (5 in all -3 single, and a double – all ruined) Drangs (2, joining together near their centres)	<p>The 1888 map shows 4 sheds here. Of these, the pair of 2 had already lost its roof. The 1906 map shows only the walls of one shed left, north of the double.</p> <p>The north shed, a SM eroded by the sea, is now listed as 'At Risk'. Banks of an ancient shed on the south were recorded in 2019 (Greeves 2024).</p> <p>The 1888 map also records the drangs, all still visible at low tide.</p>	<p>The project's full plan, 3D models, and photos explore how this outlying par (the local word for porth) was used as a base for pilotage, strategically sited for work around the Western Rocks (Figs 45-57).</p> <p>The site has a remarkable link to the history of the Zulu King Cetewayo, who visited London in 1882. A pilot gig once kept here was named <i>Cetewayo</i> in his honour, as is St Agnes' new gig built in 2024 by Patrick Bird.</p> <p>The report looks into the meanings, for the pilots of the time, of King Cetewayo's story (Part 1.4).</p>
36 Periglis (by Lifeboat House) SV 87735 08325	Gig shed (former site)	<p>The 1906 OS map shows a gig shed then standing immediately north of the Lifeboat House of c1890.</p> <p>No remains are evident. The shed, made of timber clad with iron, may have left little trace.</p> <p>Islanders recall the shed here housing the <i>Slippen</i> (Francis Hicks, pers. comm.), still in use on Scilly today.</p>	<p><i>Slippen</i> was sold by St Martin's pilots to St Agnes in 1869. While based on St Agnes, she saved lives from the wreck of the <i>TW Lawson</i> near Annet (Jenkin 1975, 56-57).</p> <p>The huge, 5,000 ton schooner was described by one of the gig's crew as looming over them with her seven masts 'like a forest'. The pilot boarded, and tragically was among those lost with the ship (Hicks 2015, 3-4).</p>
37 Periglis SV 87762 08360 (Gig shed) CSHER 31075	Gig sheds (2 or 3, or more. Four shorter sheds on the 1888 map may have been gig sheds re-roofed in the past. All are now buried in sand or have been eroded)	<p>The 1888 map shows 7 sheds on this long west-facing shore.</p> <p>Two, towards the south end, were clearly for gigs. A shorter one stood between them.</p> <p>Sheds further north (a triple and a square shed resembling a double) were all shorter again.</p> <p>Only the square shed, marked 'Boat House', was roofed in 1888.</p>	<p>This would have been a striking row of sheds, over 100m long.</p> <p>Periglis is the island's ancient centre; its Cornish name means 'Church Cove'. Islanders rebuilt the church, with salvage fees from a wreck off Annet, c1685 (Troutbeck 1796, 152) (north of the present church of c1800.)</p> <p>Gigs will have been based here from the 17C. There may be remains buried under the sand dunes that cover this site.</p>

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
<i>Samson</i>			
38 West Porth SV 87750 12790 (approx.) SM 1016509 CSHER 30867	Gig shed (ruins)	A Duchy of Cornwall estate survey of c1830 records a gig shed here held by the Webber family. Its base survives and was excavated in 1977 (Figs 95 and 96).	Investigation of the shed and the nearby cottage and midden has provided rare evidence of its past use (Mason 1983). Part 2.2 in the present report looks at the results of the excavations, and indications of use of the site in the early 19C by the Preventives.
39 East Porth SV 87820 12880 (Gig shed, approx.) SM 1016509 CSHER 31115	Gig shed (ruins) Drang (possible site)	The c1830 map shows the Woodcocks' shed here. The 1888 map marks tidal ways below, part strewn with stone at that time; one may be an old gig drang.	In 2009 the east shed was identified with a feature on the ground and traces of stonework recorded (Johns, Berry and Mulville 2013, 23). (The NGRs given for both Samson sheds are estimated from the c1830 map and from Mason 1983.)
<i>Bryher</i>			
40 Kitchen Porth SV 88145 15480 (centre of <i>Rapid's</i> Drang)	Drangs (3)	The innermost drang of 3 in this par, 40m long, was used in working the pilot cutter <i>Rapid</i> (Richard Jenkins, pers. comm.) so was in use c1848-1882 (Fig 11). A rock beside <i>Rapid's</i> Drang has a splitting mark of c1600-1800 (c13m along from the west end, on the south side). One or more drangs could point to one or more gig shed sites, but none are known.	<i>Rapid</i> was built in 1848 for ten men from the Jenkins, Ellis, Stedeford, Pender, Woodcock, Hicks, Edwards, and Buxton families, and a woman from St Mary's shipping family the Banfields (Jenkins 1975, 53). The gig <i>Albion</i> owned by the <i>Rapid</i> pilots saved men from the wreck of the <i>Delaware</i> in 1871 (Part 1.5). <i>Rapid</i> later took those survivors on to St Mary's, probably from here. <i>Rapid's</i> drang was not fully mapped in 1888, so its use may have lapsed for a while after the cutter was broken in 1882.
41 North of the Bar SV 88169 15305 (Gig shed)	Gig shed (ruined) Drang	The 1888 map shows a roofless gig shed, with its south side partly gone, in a field corner. Walling remains on the north and west; a 20C hedge line takes in the east (front) end.	Kitchen Porth was the only hamlet on the shore of Bryher in 1792 (others being inland for security), and the 1888 map marks 'Old Well' c20m south; so this shed may be an early one. <i>Longkeel</i> , once a Tresco gig (at Site 53), was here at one time (Richard Jenkins, pers. comm.).

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
42 The Bar SV 88170 15232	Gig shed	<p>This shed mapped in 1888 housed the 1886 gig <i>Sussex</i> (Harris 1994, 108). Wooden 'ways' were said to have been used here to launch the gig (Gillis n.d., 15) (Fig 5).</p> <p>The Duchy of Cornwall has restored the shed with a traditional-style tile roof. It now houses the 2020 gig <i>Alfie Jenkins</i>, named after the Scillonian gig historian who recorded much information used in the present survey (Jenkins 1975).</p> <p>A small front lobby added to the old shed has displays on gig racing and heritage.</p>	<p>The <i>Sussex</i> was paid for with fees from salvage work on the steamer <i>Sussex</i> wrecked on Maiden Bower west of Bryher (Harris 1994, 108).</p> <p><i>Sussex</i> was the only gig left on the east of Bryher c1950, serving for island transport as well as wreck rescue and salvage (Jenkins 1975, 67).</p> <p>As late as 1955 <i>Sussex</i> went out to the wreck of the <i>Mando</i> steamer west of St Helen's (<i>ibid</i>). A hatch re-used in the wall below the window in the gable end of Faye Page's silver workshop at Lower Town, St Martin's, was from the <i>Mando</i> (Rob Davies, pers. comm.).</p> <p><i>Sussex</i> is now kept at St Agnes in the <i>Campernell</i> shed (Site 33.)</p>
43 Stony Porth (Middle Carn) SV 87460 14244 (approx.)	Gig shed (possible former site)	<p>A feature in an old photo taken from a distance appears to be the apex of a roof to a shed on Stony Porth (Richard Pearce, pers. comm.).</p> <p>At this location there are some pieces of the Bridgwater tile used for roofing (Fig 99). They could be from a shed perhaps dating from after 1906, though various other explanations are possible!</p>	<p>The scatter of broken tiles is aligned with an edge on the shore below where the tidal rocks give way to sand. This is seemingly (but not clearly) natural rather than the result of a drang structure. However, sand is deposited fast here, so there could be a drang which is now filled with it.</p> <p>This shoreline changes rapidly (Richard Pearce, pers. comm.). MHW appears to be c15m beyond that of 1888, so any remains of an earlier period may lie under sand or shingle.</p>
44 Great Porth SV 87620 14600 (approx.)	Gig shed (possible former site)	<p>There is some tradition of a gig shed north of Great Carn (Chris Potterton, pers. comm.). It would be early, as it is not shown on the 1888 map. The dunes are eroded here so any remains may have gone. There is a hint of a sand-filled drang but it is not clear.</p>	<p>If there was a shed here, it might have housed the <i>Venus</i> (Richard Jenkins, pers. comm.). <i>Venus</i> was an early Bryher gig, banned in 1828 for smuggling (Jenkins 1975, 68).</p> <p>If so, there would have been five sheds at four sites (the shed furthest north being a double), spaced roughly equally, along the length of this north half of Great Porth.</p>

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
45 Great Porth SV 87588 14668 CSHER 30594	Gig shed (restored)	<p>This shed, restored as an artist's studio, housed the 1870 gig <i>Golden Eagle</i>, built in 1870 and still in use. The shed floor was of beach stones set in a layer of earth some 9 inches thick. This helped prevent the gig drying out. Wooden 'ways' were used instead of a slipway. The <i>Bonnet</i> formerly on St Martin's (at Site 57) was later kept in the roof here (Richard Pearce, pers. comm.).</p>	<p>The naming of <i>Golden Eagle</i> refers to the source of the £32 the pilots paid to have her built; the gold dollars, bearing the US eagle arms, paid to them for services at the wreck of the <i>Award</i> on Gweal west of Bryher. Timber salvaged from the <i>Award</i> was used at Tresco Abbey, for building work in the existing dining room and in an extension (Jenkins 1975, 62).</p> <p>One of the more recent of the many wrecks attended by <i>Eagle</i> was the <i>Minnehaha</i> that struck on Scilly Rock in 1910, when she helped rescue cattle from the ship as did <i>Czar</i> (Fig 58).</p>
46 Great Porth SV 87548 14706 CSHER 30594 SM 1016173	Gig shed (low ruins/ earthwork) Slipways (2, sites now altered)	<p>An earthwork here is the base of the shed of the renowned 'Cut-throat <i>Czar</i>', originally fitted for 8 oars. The gig was ordered from Peters yard in 1879 specifically to beat the <i>Eagle</i> (Jenkins 1975, 58-59).</p> <p>The <i>Porths and Gigs</i> project has made a plan and 3D models of the site and its setting (Part 1.5).</p> <p>The shed is a SM and is listed as 'at risk' due to the impact of the sea on this low-lying site.</p>	<p>The <i>Czar</i> has always been kept on Scilly. Doors at both ends, and thatch shown in a photo of c1950, add to the interest of her original shed (Part 1.5.)</p> <p>Related heritage includes the bell of the old Carn Thomas school, St Mary's (still in its turret), brought by <i>Czar</i> from the German ship <i>Erik Rikmers</i> lost on Scilly Rock in 1899. <i>Czar</i> and <i>Eagle</i> rescued the ship's crew. The same day they attended another wreck on the same rock, the <i>Parame</i> (Jenkins 1975, 59; Harris 1994, 116). The Jenkins and Lethbridge families salvaged the <i>Erik Rikmers'</i> sails, sold for £2,000 (Fraser Hicks, pers. comm.).</p>
47 Great Porth SV 87489 14732	Gig shed (double, former site)	<p>The north corner of Great Porth, west of a drain from Great Pool, is the former site of the shed of the <i>Albion</i> of 1844 and probably the <i>March</i> (Richard Jenkins, Bryher, pers. comm.).</p> <p>One gable end wall was left in 1888. Sea-defence works have now been made here.</p>	<p>The gigs kept here were used in rescuing two ships' mates in 1871, after the steamer <i>Delaware</i> foundered west of Samson in a hurricane.</p> <p>John Gibson of St Mary's reported on the wreck from Bryher where the mates were recovering (<i>Cornish Telegraph</i>, December 27th 1871, 2-3; Gibson and Sons c1932, 84). His account gives details of this renowned rescue (Part 1.5).</p>

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
Tresco			
48 Raven's Porth (north) SV 89310 15805	Gig sheds (sites of 2, rebuilt for other use)	<p>The 1887 map shows two gig-sized sheds, with several shorter buildings between them. By 1906 the southern one had no roof.</p> <p>These sites now have new buildings with gig shed-derived design elements. Similar buildings stand in between them, so forming a series of six.</p>	<p>The hamlet in this area is early, marked on the 1792 map with a couple of houses on Raven's Porth itself. Ruins of a traditional house (south of the gig shed sites) and an earthwork where another old building stood (to the north) survive nearby. (The slipway with stone surfacing here is 20C, not mapped in 1906.)</p> <p>Pilot crews working from here would have been among those using the lookout on Beacon Hill (presented in Part 1.5).</p>
49 Green Porth (School Green) SV 89350 15500	Gig shed (former or buried site)	<p>The 1887 and 1906 maps show a gig shed north of where the island's Community Centre now stands. The site is on the roadside, now at the mouth of an access way to the Centre.</p> <p>The shed is not visible on the ground; there could possibly be some buried remains.</p>	<p>Like Raven's Porth, Green Porth will have been a base for gigs working in Old Grimsby Harbour. The hamlet of Green was called Cellar when the 1792 map was made. It was the site of a cellar (meaning store, not basement) of the Godolphins, burnt down in 1769 with goods indicating some of the range of maritime commerce the gigs will have served (Troutbeck 1796, 122).</p>
50 Green Porth (Rocket House) SV 89366 15484	Gig shed (double; possible site)	<p>A square of walling (now holding a later timber shed) is the size of a double gig shed. It may have begun as one, but in 1887 was a Rocket House.</p> <p>The 1830 gig <i>Bonnet</i>, still in use today, was kept here before the mid-20C (Stuart Jenkins, pers. comm.).</p>	<p>See comment on Green, above. (The 'Rocket House' shown here on the 1887 map was for storing life-saving apparatus ready to go on a carriage to fire a line to ships in danger.)</p> <p><i>Bonnet</i> is among the gigs used on several islands, having been kept on St Martin's (at Site 57), and later in the roof of the <i>Eagle</i> shed on Bryher (Site 45).</p>
51 Green Porth (Tin Shed) SV 89505 15412	Gig sheds (2; the Tin Shed stands as a ruin and part of the other shed may remain)	<p>The 1887 map shows two sheds. The east one, re-roofed in the mid-20C, is called the Tin Shed (Stuart Jenkins, pers. comm.).</p> <p>The Tin Shed seems to have opened at the inland end (Fig 105).</p>	<p>The Tin Shed housed the gig <i>Swift</i>, that worked with the cutter <i>Swift</i> of c1848-1869 (Joby Newton, pers. comm., and Jenkins 1975, 68).</p> <p>O&M was kept here before being broken up (information thanks to Mrs Mac Kay, née Venn, and Diana Mompoloki).</p>

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
52 Bathinghouse Porth (Carn Near) SV 89326 13593 (approx.) CSHER 30179	Gig shed (probably formerly a bathing machine house)	<p>The 1887 map shows this building. In 1977 Michael Tangye noted it as a ruin, 12m x 6m inside (Fig 75)</p> <p>The <i>Normandy</i>, a fine ship's longboat, was once kept here by the Dorrien-Smiths of Tresco Abbey (Jenkins 1975, 65).</p> <p><i>Gleaner</i> and <i>Longkeel</i> (the latter formerly at Farm Beach, Site 53) were kept here more recently, as recalled by islanders who played here as children, among them the grandfather of Joby Newton (pers. comm.).</p>	<p>The shed may have housed a mobile bathing machine of the kind drawn down to the sea for use by the gentry, as the place-name suggests. This would be consistent with the size of the shed being unusual for boats.</p> <p>Whether originally a bathing house or a boat house, it was clearly part of Tresco Estate's infrastructure. The track to it is a branch from the 'Carn Near Road' that curves over the dunes to the Abbey, a route newly made for Augustus Smith in the mid 19C (North 1850).</p> <p>The shed fell into ruin when its lessees removed the roof to avoid imposition of council rate charges (Jenkins 1975, 65).</p>
53 Farm Beach (Seaplane slipway) SV 88938 14970	Gig shed (former site)	<p>The 1887 and 1906 maps, and old photos, show a thatched gig shed in the Bay at New Grimsby. The gig <i>Longkeel</i> was here (Jenkins 1975, 64).</p> <p>In the Great War, the long slip of the Abbey Farm seaplane base was built with its inner end on the shed site.</p>	<p>As this shed was separate from the farm (although only 65m away), and was in traditional rather than estate style, it may have been made independently of the estate, in the first half of the 19C or earlier. Abbey records could possibly provide more information.</p> <p>After the shed was removed <i>Longkeel</i> was kept at Carn Near (Site 52). She was also kept at some stage on Bryher north of the Bar (Site 41).</p>
54 New Grimsby SV 88878 15260	Gig shed Slipway	<p>A concrete gig shed here dates from the early 20C, after 1906. It is built against a larger Tresco Estate boathouse of similar date, converted to a gallery. There is a concrete slip below.</p> <p>The <i>Zelda</i> was kept here after she was at Point (Site 56) (Richard Jenkins and Stuart Jenkins, pers. comms.)</p>	<p>This may be the most recent pilot gig shed still standing on Scilly. With the typical form of a gig shed, and new materials, it helps link the traditional and modern heritage of the gigs.</p> <p>The <i>Zelda</i> was sold in the 1950s to Padstow where she was damaged by a lorry. Her bow and stern sections were displayed in Hugh Town's 'Pilot Gig' bar (the stern with the name of another gig, <i>Gypsy</i>, added) (Jenkins 1975, 69).</p>

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
55 Point SV 88671 15331 (approx.)	Gig shed (ruined) Slipway	<p>The 1887 map shows a building of gig shed size already ruined. It had a post standing on its lower end.</p> <p>Its slipway remains on the shore below (with concrete laid and other alterations in connection with a telecommunications cable).</p> <p>This slipway appears on the 1862 painting that features the shed to its north (cover photo).</p>	<p>This is likely to have been an early gig shed as it was already disused in 1887.</p> <p>The shed site itself is not visible in the view of 1862, so it is not clear if it was still in use at that time.</p> <p>The post on the 1887 map may have been a precursor of the cable marker here. The off-islands were connected with St Mary's by telephone cables c1890 (<i>Cornish Telegraph</i>, August 11th, 1892, 8).</p>
56 Point SV 88642 15346 (approx.)	Gig sheds (Double, ruined) Slipway (Double)	<p>The painting on the report cover, <i>A Sailors' Wedding Party</i> by James Clarke Hook, was exhibited in 1863, so it was probably painted on Scilly in 1862 (thanks to Graeme Kirkham formerly of CAU, for information).</p> <p>It shows the double shed and its slipways. A gig also appears, on the south east slip.</p> <p>The sheds were sloping, their walls incorporated large rocks, and their roofs were of roped thatch.</p> <p>The north west shed seems to have been disused by 1887.</p> <p>Some ruins of that shed, at least, still stand under scrub.</p> <p>The slips with slab paving remain too.</p> <p>One slab, shifted by the sea, has a socket, perhaps for a timber frame to a doorway through which <i>Zelda</i> went to work (Fig 101).</p>	<p>The 1874 gig <i>Zelda</i> is known to have been kept first at Point (Stuart and Richard Jenkins, pers. comms.). It would seem she was in the south eastern shed here – the nearer one in the report cover image- as this was still in use in 1887.</p> <p>The details of the sheds shown in the painting appear to be typical of the gig shed building tradition.</p> <p>The gig was bought from Peters of St Mawes by the Tresco pilots with earnings from saving lives and salvage from the steamer <i>Zelda</i> of Liverpool wrecked on Maiden Bower (Jenkins 975, 69).</p> <p>The gig was in use in 1901 when the <i>Falkland</i>, a sailing ship, struck the Bishop Rock lighthouse and sank. Her crew retrieved the body of one of the wreck victims, found in Hell Bay west of Bryher. (Jenkins 975, 69). At that time <i>Zelda</i> was still based here; she was moved in the first half of the 20C to New Grimsby (Site 54).</p> <p>As the sheds were already here at Point in 1862, they were originally built for use by other gigs.</p>

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
St Martin's			
57 Par Beach (also known as Higher Town Bay) SV 93031 15263 (Westernmost of the group of gig sheds today, which is one of the historic ones) CSHER 30668	Gig sheds (At least 7 old pilot gig sheds altogether) One is re- roofed; The site of one has a new shed now on it; Four sheds are lost to erosion or buried in sand; and One buried in sand is partly visible Drang (now covered in sand)	The 3 sheds standing here now (Fig 83) are, from west to east (Terry Perkins and Steve Walder pers. comm.); A The last historic gig shed still standing here, dating from c1900. The shed has been re-roofed and is re-used as a water sports centre. B and C , the modern sheds of the <i>Galatea</i> of 2001 and the 1969 <i>Dolphin</i> ; these replace c1900s boat- and gig sheds. West of A is a shed now buried in sand (Fig 102) (thanks to Steve Walder for information). This is aligned with a drang mapped in 1888 now covered in sand. East of the standing sheds, the 1888 map shows 10 now eroded away or buried in sand. At least 4 of these were gig sized.	The shed at A and that formerly on site C could have been used for gigs known to have been at Par Beach in the 1900s; the old <i>Galatea</i> , used until the 1930s; <i>Sultan</i> (or <i>Sulton</i>), brought here from St Mary's in 1910; and <i>Emperor</i> , in use in 1902 (Jenkins 1975, 61, 62, 67, and Harris 1994, 178). The <i>Queen</i> was kept east of the three sheds now standing. A particularly large gig shed was mapped there (next to where C would later stand) in 1888. <i>Queen</i> is recorded as having been the largest known gig (Jenkins 1975, 67); and she is recalled as having been housed east of the present sheds (Steve Walder, pers. comm.). There were at least 10 sheds east of the standing ones, 4 or more of them for gigs to judge by their sizes in 1888. <i>Bonnet</i> , built for St Martin's in 1830 and still used today, was also kept at this par. She was later at Tresco (at Site 50). A rib from <i>Bonnet</i> is among the project models in Part 1.1; Fig 23).
58 Old Quay SV 92783 15170 CSHER 30984 (North gig shed) CSHER 30985 (Slipway to the above)	Gig sheds (At least 5; 2 re- roofed, and others in ruin, these including a double shed or possibly 2 doubles) Slipway	The 1792 map shows a building, either the double shed on the south of the complex or a shed (possibly once also a double) near the centre. Both of those were mapped in 1888, and survive as ruins. By 1888 there was a shed with a slip on the north (Fig 82). By 1906 there was one on the north east. These northern sheds have modern roofs.	A poster map of some of the historic gigs of the islands, published by 'Planaship', marks the gig <i>Linnet</i> as based at Old Quay (thanks to James Pearce for sight of the poster). The <i>Linnet</i> is said to date from 1830 (Harris 1994, 92). A ship <i>Linnet</i> was lost in Crow Sound in 1817 (Larn 1999, 155). Possibly the name refers to that ship. The gig rescued the crew of the Dutch schooner <i>Alida</i> in 1869 (Jenkins 1975, 64). Old Quay may date from the 17C (CSHER 30983). This site may then have some of Scilly's earliest gig shed archaeology.

Location, NGR, ref. nos.	Main features	Description	Heritage interest
59 Lower Town Par SV 91457 16047 CSHER 31597	Gig sheds (6) Smaller boat sheds or pens (several) Drang (now covered in sand)	<p>The 1888 map shows a close-set row of gig-sized sheds and some smaller structures. The number of gig sheds is known locally as 6 (Steve Walder, pers comm.) and the historic map evidence fits with this.</p> <p>The smaller sheds, and some associated lengths of walling, may be traces of other gig sheds, changed over time.</p> <p>Blown sand is accumulating in the par, and the site is now buried in dunes (Fig 107). Walls can be made out as linear bumps or even exposed when wind blows the sand off.</p>	<p>These sheds appear in photos of the 1930s, kept on St Martin's and copied 50 years later by Cornish archaeologist Michael Tangye courtesy of Mrs P. Howell.</p> <p>As noted by Michael Tangye, the old photos add greatly to the interest of the site. They show the traditional character of the gig sheds, with roofs of thatch secured by rope (Fig 12).</p> <p>The Peters' gig <i>Empress</i> was kept at Lower Town (Jenkins 1975, 61).</p> <p>Islanders recall a gig in a shed here full of sand, and consider that one may still remain, now fully buried in sand (Steve Walder, pers. comm.)</p>
60 South of Goat's Point (west of the north part of the hotel) SV 91436 16253 CSHER 31099 & 31100	Gig shed/s (1 or possibly 2) Slipway	<p>Michael Tangye found eroded footings of a gig shed on the shore in July 1987. He made a drawing, reproduced with kind permission as Fig 104; and noted the side walls were 36 feet long and up to 8 feet six inches apart. Michael Tangye's drawing also shows a separate slipway to the beach, which he notes was paved. This was where the road to the modern Lower Town Quay is now (north of Bab's Carn). CAU made a plan of the wider site in 1990, showing the shed with a related sea wall or revetment and a possible second gig shed on the west (Ratcliffe and Sharpe 1991, 69-71).</p>	<p>The shed shows the slightly boat-shaped plan seen at other sheds potentially 18C or even 17C (Figs 10 and 103).</p> <p>It would not have housed a wide beam gig but was relatively long. Perhaps it was designed for housing one of the eight-oared gigs banned by the Excise at an early date (Jenkins 1975, 16).</p> <p>This site marks a former edge of the shore, now scoured away by the sea.</p> <p>The MHW line appears to have advanced more than a gig's length here since Victorian times, when the maps of 1888 and 1906 are compared with that of the present day – a reminder of the threat from the sea to Scilly's coastal pilot gig archaeology.</p>



Fig 97 Shed on the north at Porth Hellick, St Mary's, adapted from one mapped in 1887, seen from its drang.



Fig 98 East side of a slip covered in beach boulders at Carn Leh, St Mary's, in 2019.



Fig 99 Hollow possibly an eroded gig shed at the head of a drang largely filled with rocks at Dropnose Porth, Gugh (right of centre, beyond the knoll in the foreground).



Fig 100 One of a spread of pieces of Bridgwater tile, in the vicinity of a possible shed site indicated by an old photo (Richard Pearce, pers. comm.), Stony Porth, Bryher.



Fig 101 Granite slab with square socket of the type used for a timber upright at the slipway of the old Zelda house seen on the report cover, Point, Tresco.



Fig 102 Exposed wall indicating a gig shed otherwise buried in dunes east of standing sheds at Par Beach, St Martin's (thanks to Steve Walder for pointing out the site).

4 Importance of Scilly's gig shed archaeology

Overview of the results of the Porths and Gigs of the Isles of Scilly project

The *Porths and Gigs* project is an investigation of the archaeology of pilotage on Scilly, focussing on Scheduled Monuments and other sites now at risk from the sea. It combines different strands of evidence, interpretation, and local knowledge. Results are shared on the website [Porths and Gigs of the Isles of Scilly](#), as well as in this report. They include detailed plan drawings and interactive virtual 3D models, capturing parts of historic gigs, earthworks, ruins, and remains that are only fully exposed at extreme low tides.

Porths and Gigs is a landscape community archaeology type project. It has involved plane table survey, scanning and photogrammetry to generate the virtual 3D models, and illustrative photography, at selected sites; targeted visits and assessment for other sites; informal local discussions; and rapid documentary study. The findings indicate 60 gig shed sites overall, which have between them 90 sheds (counting double sheds as two). Six sites are Scheduled or partly so. Half of the 90 are standing buildings or are visible as archaeology. The individual sheds (or at least the groups of sheds) that housed 22 of the 70 or so old gigs of Scilly recorded by name, are identifiable.

Volunteers helped greatly with the survey work, making it possible to extend this to take in an additional site (Innisidgen, St Mary's). Islanders contributed much of the information, including at an initial presentation and discussion of results on St Agnes, and on a school visit to the survey at Peraskin (Porth Askin) there. This has enhanced understanding of aspects of the sites, such as how features in the landscape served as marks for the drangs (see further below) that link the porths and the open sea (Fig 103). (At the time of writing, other presentations of the work and results, with opportunities to share more perspectives and information, are planned too.) The project draws also on previous archaeological recording done on a voluntary basis (Fig 104).

Local knowledge has been central to interpretation as well as recognition of sites. Information gratefully received includes confirmation that sheds can have doors to landward only (to avoid blown sand), identification of double sheds which can appear simply as squares on the old maps, location of sheds built after 1906 (so not appearing on the 25 inch map of that date), links between sheds and named gigs and traditions, identification of the inter-tidal ways that served the sheds, terms used for these last (the Bryher word 'drang', being a dialect term, has been used in presenting the project results), the distinction of drangs from kelping or seaweed gathering ways, and more.

The detailed survey plans capture the layout of some contrasting examples of the bases used for pilotage; a cluster of gig sheds at New Quay on St Mary's with ready access to Crow Sound and the northern off-islands, and a group at Peraskin (Porth Askin) on the south of St Agnes at the outer fringe of Scilly facing the hazardous Western Rocks. The plans show how gig sheds were deployed on the shores, how some date from the 18th century or earlier, and how they have changed over time.

The virtual models on the website can be spun and zoomed (screenshots of them illustrate this report). They include a 'whole porth' model of Peraskin, adapted as a base for pilotage on a scale not possible to take in fully all at once on the ground. These models allow people to explore the sites, who may not be able to get to them or to reach the features exposed only at extreme low water. The models help too with picturing the coastal and hilltop sites as experienced by the pilot crews and their lookouts. Through them you can see how places were extensively planned, shaped, and maintained, to serve for the rapid launching of gigs, and the gaining and exchanging of visual information, key to the pilots' work. The project team were also kindly invited to capture as 3D models some of the heritage of gig building preserved at Porthloo boathard.

The project's wider and more rapid investigation, looking for evidence for gigs around the coasts, has extended all around the five inhabited islands and also (as a desk-top study only) to Samson where people lived until the mid-19th century. This has shown that archaeological remains of the historic gigs are prolific on Scilly, and are a core part of the heritage of the landscape. Through these sites numerous aspects of past ways of life, and links to other types of archaeology and historic buildings, can be seen.



Fig 103 Gig trackway or drang at Peraskin, St Agnes, aligned with a distinctive rock ridge on the skyline named the Old Woman's House (Harry Legg, pers. comm.).

The mark could have been used to keep a boat on the trackway by steering a course between it and another mark similarly aligned with the trackway in the opposite direction.

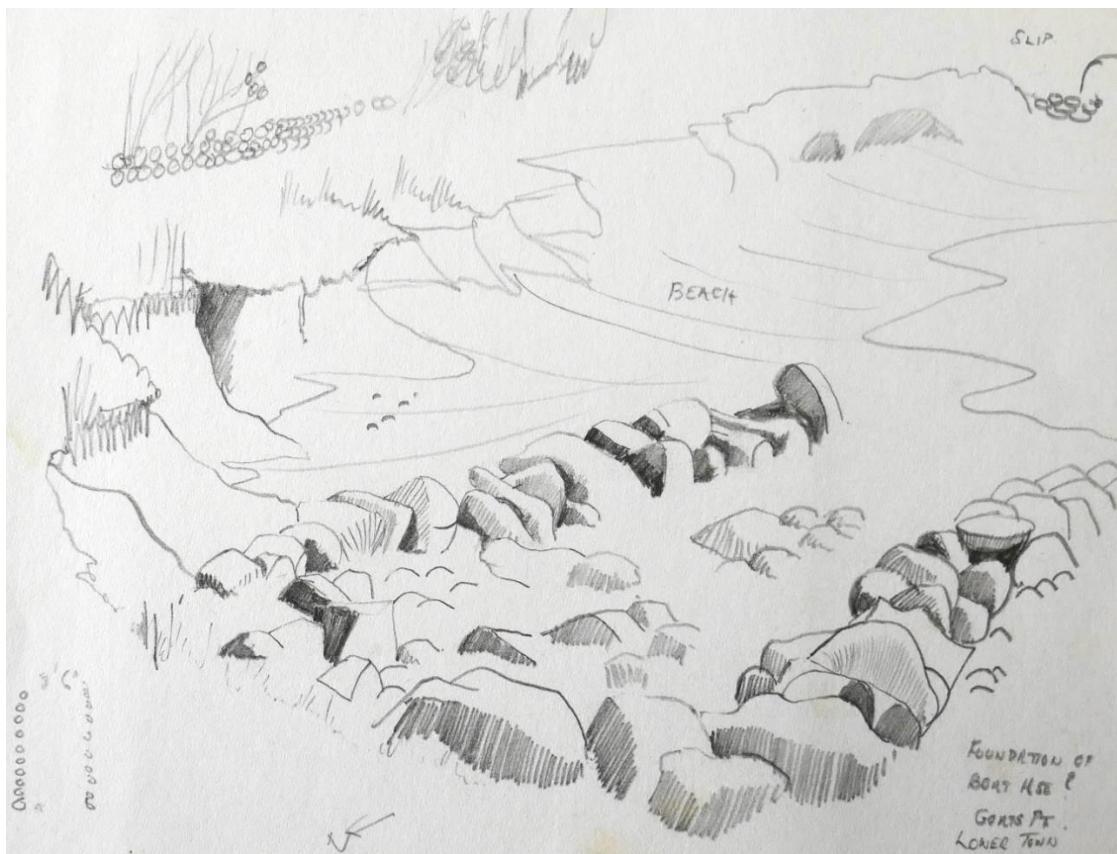


Fig 104 Base of gig shed, with separate slip to right, at Lower Town, St Martin's, 1987; measured sketch drawing by Michael Tangye. (Reproduced with kind permission.)

Evidence for gigs from records of the 17th century indicates that the gig rowing heritage of today has been transmitted through 400 years, or 16 generations, on the islands – as in Cornwall where, however, few historic gigs, and gig sheds, are at present known to survive. The archaeology contributes much to the picture of ‘time depth’ in the use and housing of gigs. Survey plan results show how some sheds within the same site were built after others, how some had gone long before 1887 (when the first universal detailed OS mapping came to Scilly), and how sites changed use and shed materials were re-used over time, in ways characteristic of the islands. The striking scale and longevity of the gig archaeology is a reflection of the high level, and long continuation, of demand for pilotage, life-saving, salvage, and other adaptable boat work requiring local knowledge and daring, in the seaways around the islands.

The skill and courage of pilots in the use of gigs is noted in the earliest detailed accounts of life here. ‘The Islanders are allowed to be the Best Seamen, and Pilots in any parts of the world, for they frequently go out in their Open boats, amongst these dangerous rocks, and bring in Ships The boats men run Very Great risks in going out in very Bad weather and often Venture when the Seas run mountains high....’ (Spry 1800, 10).

Gigs had many uses besides pilotage, and formerly were not registered, although the islands’ ‘Court of Twelve’ had some regulatory roles (Jenkins 1975, 13). However, when Trinity House took over regulation, in the early 19th century, there were 76 pilots here; 23 on St Mary’s, 14 on St Agnes, 7 on Bryher, 18 on Tresco, and 14 on St Martin’s. (Trinity House intended to select 9 pilots only, but instead 37 were licensed. Numbers later fell to 15 in 1876, 8 in 1900, and 3 in 1958: *op cit*, 14). The numbers of crew would have been far greater, and are hard to estimate. When the census records, that noted people’s occupations, were made later in the 19th century, many could be at sea, or could be identified as farmers when they were also boatmen at other times.

Earnings from pilotage and salvage varied. In the mid-18th century pilots’ fees could be five shillings (Borlase 1756, 43). At that time, a gig built on Scilly could cost £5-£20 or more (Heath 1750, 39). In contrast, a boat earned ten pounds and ten shillings for pilotage of the *Victory* of Dunkirk (Peter Fishane, Master, from St Domingo for Dunkirk), brought into Old Grimsby Harbour in October 1769 (Troutbeck 1796, 183). This sum, equivalent to over £1,000 today, around 1770 would command a hundred days’ work at skilled trades rates (National Archives and Bank of England conversion websites).

The high demand for the gigs’ work, its value, and islanders’ readiness to put out and compete for it in all sea states, is reflected in the extent and range of the archaeology combined with evidence from the detailed OS maps of 1887-1888 and of 1906.

As mentioned previously, the coastal archaeology includes, besides sheds, the drangs or monumental rock-lined ways made for gigs to pass through inter-tidal rocks, some reaching a phenomenal length. Various other terms for them were used on different islands or at different times – lake, or trackway. These variations in namings are likely to be significant in themselves, reflecting differences in the islands’ histories which may reach back as far as the dawn of the age of gigs in the 17th century when their people could be afflicted by changes from extreme phases of sand blow to raiding from the sea to deadly infections carried by ships.

Some drangs run to the extreme outer limit of the inter-tidal zone, a reflection perhaps of their having been formed when that zone was significantly further out than today. Here there is marine ecology covering the boulder sides and rock-strewn floors of the drangs, only exposed for an hour or so around the lowest tides of the year.

The relationship between the total number of old sheds recorded through the project, c90 (counting each of the 10 double sheds as two), and the early 19th century total of 76 pilots (noted above), is complex. The known sheds include those of the later 19th and early 20th centuries. Some early sheds (lost to the sea, or wholly buried in sand) may have left no trace on maps, if they were built on strategic but sandy shores where no drang was needed, such as Pelistry, whose Cornish name means ‘Boat Porth’. However, the numbers do reflect the large scale of pilotage, which may be inferred, on the basis of its having been clearly needed, as dating from the 17th century.

The mapping of all known sites on an air photo base (Fig 110) shows that gig sheds were located to access shipping roads, and avoid sand flats, whilst using any opportunities for shelter and proximity to dwelling places. While the majority of sheds were single in terms of their size, they were typically sited in groups. They shared the shores that were natural landing places and also those that could be made to serve by making drangs. The sheds or pairs of them, representing separate pilotage groups, appear to have been spaced by custom at regular intervals so that, overall, they shared out all the space available (that was navigable and workably sheltered). This can be seen at Great Porth, Bryher, where the sheds set at intervals are known to have belonged to rival groups of pilots.

On broad sandy bays the sheds could be a gig's length or more apart, as they were in a group at Periglis on St Agnes (now covered in dunes). On shorter beaches between carns like Lower Town Par, St Martin's, they formed a close rank. At some sandy bays, notably at Par Beach or Higher Town Bay, St Martin's, the sheds were still similarly close. This may be because the shore was rockier in the past, requiring a drang which was later covered in sand; or, because other parts of the shore were considered too exposed to winds and seas. Where the gigs depended on a single monumental rock-lined drang to pass through inter-tidal boulders, the sheds could cluster as close as possible to the head of the drang, as at St Mary's New Quay with its fan-like arrangement of sheds.

The drangs are missing from the early smaller-scale charts. However, their presence is shown or implied, in a few cases, by details on the more complete survey of 1792, as at Perconger, St Agnes. They must date, like the gigs, from the 17th century, as they allowed sheds to be sited to command the approaches to Scilly, on the phenomenally rocky combined outer edge of the main islands. A massive rock beside *Rapid's Drang* on Bryher has a wedge-splitting mark of c1600-1800 on its underside. Drangs would also have offered some degree of security against the raids from the sea that still threatened coasts in this period. Their use would require local knowledge; and they could be defended more readily than the wide sandy bays.

Being systematically marked on the maps of c1887, drangs can point to sites of sheds ruined long before and not themselves mapped. During the project, earthworks which may be early sheds have been found in this way; at Innisidgen and south of Porth Hellick, St Mary's, and at Dropnose Porth, Gugh. The southern drang at Peraskin, St Agnes, was found to confirm the earlier interpretation as a shed of the southern earthwork there.

Archaeological evidence for other uses and changes to drangs adds further to their interest rather than detracting from it. This may be considered an important aspect of the significance of gig archaeology, like other archaeology on Scilly, typically adapted as needed over the centuries. Where kelp forests grew off the shores, drangs could be expanded with branching ways to bring up the material for the kelping trade that thrived in the later 17th and 18th centuries. The resulting networks were later used in gathering seaweed for manuring. The survey at Innisidgen, St Mary's, shows a drang with kelping and seaweeding ways (differing from it as they do not run straight to the open sea) branching off it, indicating it is earlier in origin than these.

As may be suggested by the wedge-split stone against *Rapid's Drang* at Bryher, mentioned above, drangs could also be used to haul stones from the beaches for building work. *Rapid's* drang is 3.5m wide so could have taken a cart. Others may have been used by ponies hauling 'sledges', wheel-less timber frames, such as survived in use for moving moorstones on Cornwall's Bodmin Moor almost into living memory.

The gig sheds have been more subject to change than the drangs. Some of the evidence for them is slight (Figs 98-100). However, the ruins have a clear traditional form and character, as the plans and models show. They are just large enough for a gig plus the crew carrying her by the gunwales, so are c10m (32 feet) long and only c2m wide. Like the drangs, they were made with materials to hand by the joint owners of the gigs. Walls are of rubble, or re-used stone which might be sized or roughly shaped, bound with ram (subsoil) mortar. The roofs were gabled, built of wreck timber, and covered in rope thatch or red clay tiles. Floors could be cobbled rather than paved to help keep gigs from drying out. Early sheds could be slightly boat-shaped, as at New Quay, St Mary's; later sheds could have innovative elements like the two end doors of the *Czar* shed on Bryher.

While having local materials and functional shapes, sheds could still project the pilot companies' status. Robert Heath observed on Scilly in the mid-18th century that the groups of partners in pilotage would vie in 'out-building, out-sailing, and out-braving' one another, and that the gigs were a source of pride as well as a means of livelihood; 'It is by these Boats here, as by bred Horses for Swiftness in England' (Heath 1750, 39).

Some of this prestige can be seen in the archaeology, where shed walls are well-preserved, as at New Quay. The front ends of sheds there are impressive, with large upright labs flanking the doorways, several having outward and upward slanting faces which make them more prominent. The *Czar* shed on Bryher is remembered locally as having had a timber carved with the gig's name above a doorway. This may suggest other sheds too were enhanced with features on the superstructure, unlikely to be detectable in the ruins of today, perhaps designed in part to impress rival pilots.

The project's focus on the landscape helps to see how at some early sites, like Lower Town Par, St Martin's, gig sheds were worked alongside small harbours now ruined by the sea; and how sheds could be operated from holdings based at farmsteads inland. Sheds can be half a mile or more from the nearest hamlets, with paths linking them to those small, dispersed clusters of population typical of Scilly since medieval times.

It may be that on other islands, as on Samson, old estate maps or other documentation may identify individual gig sheds with particular tenant families; so these links between homesteads and gig bases might be explored further in the future using such sources.

Many other kinds of physical and cultural heritage on the islands are related to the stories and successes of the gigs. In general, the operation of the gigs appears to be associated with men rather than women, although this might be an area of the heritage that has been relatively little recorded.

The story of a woman having habitually waved her bonnet from the hill above the gig sheds at Higher Town Bay, St Martin's, associated with the naming of the 1830 gig *Bonnet*, is evidently a long-lived tradition. It is interesting in view of the wider importance of swaying, as it was called on Scilly, that is, signalling with a cap or jacket, customary among pilot crews. While the waving may have been to wish luck to the gig, as the story goes, it may also reflect womens' involvement in scanning views and conveying information to the gig crews to further their work.

There are many other dimensions to the historical and cultural importance of the gig archaeology on Scilly. Pilots kept watch from hilltop lookouts, which, as can be seen at the sites recorded on St Martin's and Tresco, were parts of networks of inter-visible vantage and signalling points, some informal and others official, that crossed and joined up islands and could reach out to ships. The pilots worked on the vessels of all kinds passing Scilly up and down the English Channel. They were involved in naval and mercantile shipping movements on the Western Approaches. As a result, they were effectively part of the network of communications transmitting international events.

A report from Falmouth, dated August 17th 1798, for instance, related that 'Yesterday evening passed by for Plymouth, his Majesty's ship *Indefatigable*, Sir Edward Pellew [of the Cornish family], who sent his boat on shore with a letter to his Lady: the boat's crew gave us information that, two days ago, Sir Edward spoke [with] a Scilly pilot boat, the master of which informed Sir E. Pellew, that a few hours before, he was on board of a frigate from the Mediterranean, which ship was charged with dispatches from Admiral Nelson, of the greatest consequence....' (*Kentish Weekly Post or Canterbury Journal*, August 24th 1798, 4).

Through pilotage, in the ages of sail and steam, islanders often experienced momentous developments, from advances in shipping and signalling technology to naval warfare. Events of wide importance may be reflected in some of the names they gave to gigs whose building may have been funded by fees, rewards or sales gained through work related to those historic events. The report looks into the story of the naming of the old gig *Cetewayo*, housed at Peraskin, St Agnes, for the Zulu king who visited London in 1882. It is suggested that there may be potential for research to identify the namesakes and dates of other gigs, for instance the *Franklin* once kept at New Quay on St Mary's.

The more recent history of gig racing involved temporary storage of gigs before the modern club sheds were built. In the 1960s, for example, *Bonnet* and *Eagle* were kept pulled up, and covered rather than housed, at the former double gig shed site where Golden Bay Mansions was later built on St Mary's Town Beach (Jeremy Phillips, pers comm.). However, there is also archaeology of that period, including sheds made, or repaired, between the wars, to help visibly connect the ages of gig pilotage and sport.

Before the revival of gig rowing as a sport involving Newquay and other Cornish rowing clubs as well as Scilly (Jenkins 1975; Gillis 1978), there was a tradition of racing gigs on the islands developed in the era of pilotage. Results of regatta races here were published from the later 19th century. In 1876, three 6-oared gigs competed (*Cornish Telegraph* August 22nd 1876, 2). St Agnes' *Shah* won, followed by Tresco's *Zelda* and by *Guinevere* (also believed to be a St Agnes gig; Jenkins 1975, 62).

Such races, part of August Bank Holiday regattas under the auspices of St Mary's Sailing Club, continued in the decades between the wars of the 20th century. Gig sheds in use then, still standing now, or surviving as ruins, served the gigs for these sporting and recreational events, as well as for their continuing life-saving, salvage, inter-island freightage and transport, and early tourism work. In 1934, for example, the regatta's gig race was won by Bryher's *Czar*, with *Bonnet*, then based on Tresco, behind her, and in third St Mary's *Dolly Varden* whose shed still stands at Porth Cressa – each of these three gigs was based at that time in a shed which survives in one form or another today.

In conclusion, the prolific archaeology of pilot gig sheds on Scilly has many layers of local meaning, and national importance, that continue to develop through the racing and building of gigs based on the pilots' traditions. The archaeological sites of the sheds, like the old gigs still in use, are inter-woven with family and community history. Depending on the interests of the community, further exploration and sharing of this heritage, already strong in the rowing sphere, could also focus on the archaeology, to help continue to counter the gradual loss of the sites to coastal erosion and sea-level rise.

Potential future archaeological work that might be considered on Scilly could include;

- Looking at smaller uninhabited islands, where there are some old landing places;
- Plan drawing of more of the drangs and potential early gig sheds now identified;
- Archive work, to discover more for example on families' links to gig sheds, boat-yards like John Cousins' on St Mary's (Heath 1750, 39), and pilots' work at sea;
- Production of a graphic and interpretative guidebook to Scilly's gig heritage;
- For some of the more accessible sheds linked to named gigs, considering a plaque or similar commemorative sign; and archaeological freeing of walls from scrub or ivy, and recording any features such as rope thatch pegs or their holes (Fig 105);
- As opportunities arise, conservation of remains of old gigs, scientific dating of gigs or parts from them, and analysis of old colours and style of painting (Fig 106);
- Investigation of sheds buried in sand, if wanted by all interested parties (Fig 107);
- Feasibility study of restoring a ruined gig shed in traditional style with rope thatch;
- Rowing to old shed sites, as part of the periodic events celebrating the pilot gigs;
- Seeking links to island communities elsewhere with similar archaeology (Fig 108).

It is exciting to see the potential for discovery shown by the recent find of a gig re-used in the past as wall panelling (Fig 20), and to wonder what may be found next!

Finally, I would like to return to the total number of gig sheds of all dates up to the mid-20th century – c90, among them 22 sites linked to particular gigs (from among the 70 old boats currently known by name). These historic sheds, together, can be seen as representing powerfully the pilot gig tradition of the Isles of Scilly. They can be visualised, especially perhaps by gig rowers, in terms of the gig boats of today, that are brought together for the annual World Pilot Gig Championship racing. The old shed sites are similar in number to the gigs that come to Scilly for this event, and they represent the same important tradition, in a different way (Fig 109).



Fig 105 The Tin Shed, former house of the gig Swift worked with the cutter of the same name of c1848-1869, near Blockhouse on Green Porth, New Grimsby, Tresco.



Fig 106 The gig Lloyd's Green from St Mary's Town Beach at the wreck on Nornour in 1872 of the paddle steamer Earl of Arran, used for the Penzance crossing. (Morrab Library, Penzance, ref. no. COLLINS.054B; reproduced with kind permission.)

This is a rare example of an old photo showing the name of a gig, due to Lloyd's' practice of having their name clearly displayed. The bold painting of names on gigs may have spread through having been done at Newquay c1950; in earlier times names may have been painted smaller on gunwales (Fraser Hicks, pers comm) (compare Figs 14 and 16).



Fig 107 Location of sheds at Lower Town Par, St Martin's, buried in dunes (Site 59).
The curving line of bedrock stone facing on the beach below is a ruined early quay.



Fig 108 Archaeology of the sheds of traditional island 'sixareen' rowing and sailing boats at Fethaland, Shetland, in 2023. (Photo thanks to Ann Preston-Jones.)

As with the pilot gig sheds of Scilly, some sheds have stone walling still visible, while others are now turf covered earthworks whose size and shape shows their origin.



Fig 109 Gigs from Scilly, Cornwall, England, and beyond, at St Mary's Town Beach, ready for the 2024 WPGC racing. Photo credit Steve Strachan (South West Sky Visions) and thanks also to Jade Colton.

The number of gigs on the beach here is similar to that of the gig sheds (from all phases of the era of traditional pilotage) evidenced around all the coasts of the islands. Town Beach, and Porth Cressa across the isthmus, were used in the past as the bases of many gigs (compare Fig 111).

Shed sites just behind the row of boats include that of Leo on the east (left) side of the Rechabite slipway, on the opposite side of the slip from the white 'tunnel' marquee in the photo. On Porth Cressa, the last gig shed in Hugh Town known to survive still as a roofed building can be glimpsed, immediately left of the taller building towards the east (left) side of that beach. It housed the gig Dolly Varden, built in 1873 at the St Mawes yard where William Peters (1776-1859) had made the Treffry of 1838, whose lines have been used in building all the racing gigs seen here.





Fig 110 Shed sites plotted on air photo coverage, showing deployment of gigs on Scilly.
Orange dots represent sites of (or evidence for) locations of one or more old gig sheds.
Red dots mark sites which are Scheduled Monuments (or are in/partly in larger SMs).



Fig 111 Aerial photograph of Hugh Town, with sites of one or more old gig sheds or evidence of former sheds, plotted and numbered in orange.

Site 16 is a smugglers' cache (plotted in red and underlined to show it is Scheduled).



Fig 112 Map of St Mary's, with sites of one or more old gig sheds (or evidence for sites of former sheds) shown and numbered in orange. The inset box, outlined in blue, marks the Hugh Town area covered by Figure 111.

Sites (or parts of sites) in Scheduled areas are plotted in red and underlined. Innisidgen and New Quay, where the project has created 3D models and/or plans, are circled.



Fig 113 Map of St Agnes, with gig shed sites shown in orange as on the St Mary's map.

The site at Peraskin (Porth Askin), plotted in red and underlined, includes several sheds that are Scheduled Monuments. This site is also circled to show it is one of those where the project has made 3D models and plans, which here cover the whole of the porth.



Fig 114 Map of Bryher and Samson, with gig shed sites shown in orange as on the St Mary's map.

Again, where sites are Scheduled (including as part of larger Scheduled areas), they are plotted in red and underlined. The site on Great Porth, Bryher, where the project has created a plan and 3D models, is circled.



Fig 115 Map of Tresco, with gig shed sites shown in orange as on the St Mary's map.

The lookout site on Beacon Hill is marked LO. It is plotted in red and underlined as it is part of a larger Scheduled area, and it is circled to indicate that the project has made a 3D model there.



Fig 116 Map of St Martin's, with gig shed sites shown in orange as on the St Mary's map.

The lookout site of Signal Rock at Higher Town is marked LO. It is circled to indicate that the project has made a 3D model there.

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Tresco & Bryher Gig Rowing Club

Talk

2024 'History of Pilot Gigs on the Roseland', talk at St Mawes, Cornwall, by Milly Edwards (Roseland Gig Club chairman)

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