

Mick Aston has reported on his historical travels for every issue of *British Archaeology* since 2006

## MICK'S TRAVELS

### Bodmin Moor



Mick finds everything from neolithic village walls to inscribed medieval crosses among the stones of Bodmin Moor



Recently I have had to go to Cornwall several times. When I was a child, Cornwall was many hours away from where I lived in Birmingham, even days. Now with the M5 motorway and the A30 dual carriageway, even western Cornwall is very accessible. The A30 spectacularly crosses Bodmin Moor, or as it used to be known Fowey Moor, a great granite mass in eastern Cornwall. Rather like Dartmoor (Mick's travels Jan/Feb 2009/104, and Jul/Aug 2011/119), but unlike Exmoor (Mar/Apr



*Trethevy Quoit in 1969: note the hole in the capstone, and the "doorway" into the burial chamber beneath*



2013/129), Bodmin has great granite tors, and lots of impressive field monuments built out of granite slabs. It is like a smaller version of Dartmoor – but not nearly as well known.

From the early prehistoric period there are some awe-inspiring sites on Bodmin Moor. Trethevy Quoit is a great stone box with a huge capstone – the remains of a neolithic burial chamber which would probably have originally been covered by an earthen mound, around 4000–3000BC. There are lots of later cairns and bronze age round barrows, one of which, at Rillaton, contained the gold cup that is now in the museum at Truro (an excellent place to visit with fantastic displays), c 1700–1500BC. Nearby are the Three Hurlers stone circles, the best



*Bronze age round houses at Garrow*

preserved of a number of ritual monuments on the moor.

Overlooking these from the top of Stowe's Hill, are Stowe's Pound and the Cheesewring. The Pound is one of a growing number of neolithic stone-walled "tor enclosures" being recognised in the county – more or less the equivalent of the neolithic causewayed enclosures found in stone-free parts of Britain (4000–3500BC). The Cheesewring is a natural granite tor formation, but it is difficult to believe that earlier people would not have been impressed by it and curious about it, rather as we are today.

*Stowe's Pound, where granite tors are linked by remains of neolithic stone walls*