

Tresungers Cross, St Endellion – Repair and Conservation

Short description and history

The monument consists of the remains of a medieval cross of Catacleuse Stone, possibly of 15th century origin. It is a fragment only, less than 0.6 m high, with rounded arms, a latin (cross-shaped) head and short length of shaft (part of an old window mullion).

The cross was brought to St Endellion from the nearby farm of Tresungers in 1922. When it was moved to St Endellion Churchyard, it was mounted on a short granite shaft set directly in the ground. In May 1996, it was designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument, no. 1014011.

Until recently, the cross was located under a large conifer. However, during storms in the early part of 2014, branches from the tree fell on the cross, which was knocked to the ground, breaking the granite shaft on which it was mounted. Part of the granite shaft remains in the ground.

The cross was temporarily moved to a slightly safer location behind the church tower, where it is less visible. The cross was placed on the Heritage at Risk register because it was now a potentially portable artefact and as such was vulnerable to theft.

Details of Restoration

On the 28th September, 2018 the Tresungers Cross was collected from St Endellion churchyard and taken up to Bearah Tor Quarry at North Hill to be repaired and fitted with a new base-stone.

The cross was collected by Alex Piper, assisted by Lawrence Pullen and Robert Piper of C. F. Piper & Son, Stonemasons and Stone Restoration Specialists.

On 11th October 2018, Mr Piper carefully chipped away the cement mortar that had been smeared over the joint between the granite mullion and the cross itself, revealing the full shape of the cross and demonstrating how awkwardly it had been set on the mullion. Not all of the cement was removed however in order to keep the two stones stable. It was never the intention to detach the two completely, but to keep enough of the granite mullion to allow it to be sunk into the new base and keep as much of the original cross visible as possible. .

Some damage to the bottom of the cross shaft was revealed and here only the top centimetre of cement was removed. This was replaced with a dark green lime-based mortar from Mason's Mortars, which is used for the conservation repair of church windows in Cornwall made from Polyphant Stone. Polyphant is a local greenstone of similar appearance to Catacleuse Stone.

An approximately 20cm length of the mullion was cut off to enable it to be slotted into the mortice of the new base.

At the same time, a mortice 20cm deep and 30 x 20 cm across was cut into a large block of reclaimed weathered granite measuring 90 x 80 cm across and 30 cm high, acquired specially for the new base of the cross.

On Wednesday 17th Oct 2018, the cross was restored to St Endellion Churchyard. It was set on the east side of the churchyard, just to the north of the path leading from the car park into the south porch and only a few metres from the entrance (as per the faculty). It was positioned where it was not close to any marked graves.

An area of turf was removed measuring 95 cm x 85 cm x 20 cm deep, 5 cm larger than the cross-base all around, to minimise ground disturbance. The ground was checked but consisted only of a medium brown shillety soil with much rubble in it. There were a few pieces of clear bottle glass, fragments of slate and mortar. No bone was noticed and no graves disturbed.

The cross-base was moved from the van to its new position entirely by hand, using wooden rollers to manoeuvre it. It was extremely heavy and took a good deal of effort to get it into position, after which it was carefully levelled.

The cross was then brought into the churchyard, set into the base, centred, levelled, and mortared into place with a dark gritty lime-based mortar.

The cross was set into the base, so that all of the old part of the stone is exposed, but the modern mullion 'stem' remains hidden.

The Polyphant repair to the broken part of the cross shaft blends remarkably well with the colour of the original monument.

The result is that not only has the cross been repaired – it is now also a feature in the churchyard.

Ann Preston-Jones & Andrew G. Langdon









