

St Agnes Conservation Area Appraisal



“St Agnes”

Down, down in old St Agnes,
Down by the silvery sea,
Where waves are ever rolling,
Tossing the foam so free.

Here shady lanes are clustered
With ferns and grasses green,
And merry birds are twittering,
Upon the bushes seen.

Points, the weathered old Church spire,
Close by the winding street,
Where cottages and gardens fair,
With wayside meadows sweet.

Down the long and rocky path,
Where pretty sea-pinks grow,
Watching the old wheel turning,
Fixed on the stream below.

Paddling round the sea-weed rocks,
The children often rove,
Tucked up, with spade and bucket,
Digging in sandy cove.

Away upon the beacon,
O'er heather, gorse, and stiles,
Viewing the sea and country,
Mines, stacks and shafts, for miles.

And when the moon is shining,
On thatched old roofs and trees,
You hear the old owls cooing,
Perched up among the leaves.

Down, down in old St Agnes,
Beside the rumbling sea,
Wrapped in with Mithian's beauty,
A pretty spot to see.

B. Eves, June 12th, 1918

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“Conservation area appraisals, like conservation plans, depend upon an understanding of the area which draws upon techniques of conservation - based research & analysis.”

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The historic core of St Agnes is an area of special architectural interest, which was designated as a conservation Area on 31st March 1987. It is an important area of historic townscape, containing numerous listed buildings and attractive spaces.

1.2 The purpose of this document is to:

- Identify and justify the special character of the area
- Identify elements that are worthy of retention or enhancement
- Identify elements that detract from the character or appearance
- Act as a framework for the control of development
- To inform and assist decision making on development proposals
- Allow proposals to be put forward for enhancement and development opportunities
- Consider options for strengthening design control
- Consider the future of the area through the Management Plan

1.3 The appraisal highlights the special characters of the area and identifies possibilities for improvement. It will be used by the District Council in assessing development proposals that affect the conservation area. It will also provide guidance for developers, enhancing understanding of the character of the area and informing the design process.

1.4 This appraisal is not intended to be comprehensive and omission of any particular building feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

1.5 This draft document will be subject to public consultation and will be produced as Supplementary planning Guidance in support of Policies 4F, 4H, 4J, 4K, 4L, 4M, 4Q, 4R and 6G the Carrick District Wide Local Plan, adopted 1998 and Policies 2 and 3 of the Cornwall Structure Plan 2004 and the Core Strategy and other emerging documents in the LDF.

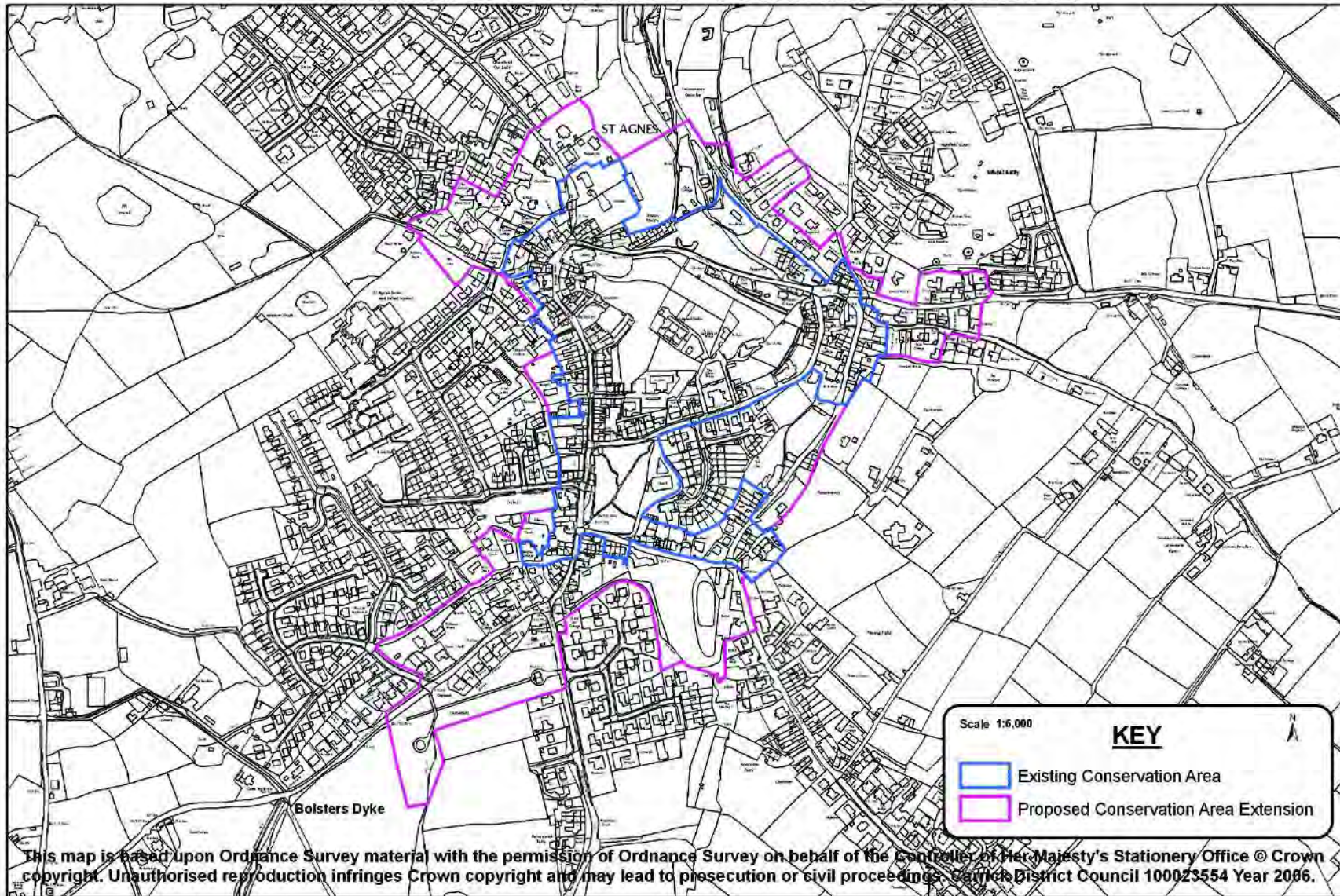
2.0 Conservation Area Boundary

2.1 Carrick District Council, as the Local Planning Authority, has a duty to designate appropriate parts of its area as Conservation Areas. At present there are some 9,080 Conservation Areas in England of which 26 are in the Carrick District.

2.2 Following Public consultation, the centre of St Agnes was designated as a Conservation Area by Carrick District Council on 31st March 1987. Since then it has not been amended.

2.3 The current boundary of the Conservation Area as shown on the Map - 3.0 Plan of St Agnes Conservation Area Boundary (opposite) shows the boundary to encompass the historic core of St Agnes village, from Town Hill in the north to Rosemundy in the south and from Peterville in the east to Vicarage Road on its western edge.

3.0 Plan of St Agnes Proposed Conservation Area Boundary



4.0 Summary of Special Interest for St Agnes

The tight-knit coastal village of St Agnes nestles in the undulating, long, steep wooded valley falling to the sea. The upland rough heath-land dominated by the old mining workings can be seen through glimpses over the roofscape from higher ground and from the valley bottom are views looking inward towards the heart of the village. The lush, well treed and green spaces within the settlement makes the villagescape melt into the landscape and blend seamlessly into the surrounding countryside. Coupled with the dramatic high cliffs at Trevaunance Cove the area exudes drama and nostalgic reference to the past.

The local vernacular architecture informs the shape and character of the streets and sense of enclosure within the village. The building layout is a combination of back edge of pavement buildings whose walls define streets and alleyways, and houses and buildings whose front walled gardens create a clear distinction to public and private space. The gardens and planting which weaves through the village, helps to soften its' form and unites the separate parts of the settlement.

Although the architectural styles are varied, its killas stone and rendered houses, with slate roofs, red ridges and brick chimneys are characteristic of the area. From organic, huddled development to formal planned areas, the villagescape of small terraced cottages, churches and chapels, schools and public houses, stands together as polite vernacular architecture, both humble and grand in stature they add a wealth of character and richness in detail. The picturesque terrace of houses stepping down the steep hillside, (former sea captain's cottages off Town Hill) known as 'Stippy Stappy' is a local iconic feature and signature landmark for this unique and beautiful village.

“The Settlement’s History.”

5.0 Context - Location and Setting

5.1 Current figures show approximately 3,000 inhabitants within the village and 7,185 in St Agnes parish as a whole.

5.2 St Agnes is located on the north coast of mid Cornwall. In Carrick District, approximately 5 miles north of Truro and one mile inland from the coast at Trevaunance Cove. St Agnes is also the name of the Parish in which it lies.

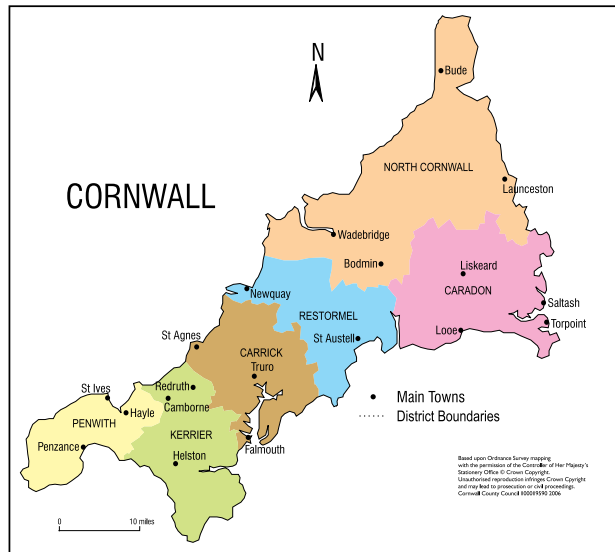


Fig 1. Location of St Agnes

Landscape setting

5.3 St Agnes Churchtown is built on a terrace of land below St Agnes Beacon, overlooking the narrow and deeply incised Trevaunance Coombe valley running down to the sea at Trevaunance Cove. Vicarage Road, runs along the level



Fig 2. Aerial photo of St Agnes

terrace above the valley. The village radiates out from Churchtown and along Vicarage Road and Rosemundy towards Goonown, encompassing Peterville at the head of Trevaunance Coombe and west along Trevaunance Road. As a result the

settlement appears to cling to the steep slopes of the valley sides, with the higher moor land forming a backdrop beyond. See aerial photograph.

Evolution of the Area

5.4 The western skyline is dominated by St Agnes Beacon, a granite intrusion rising to 192 metres and visible for many miles around. It forms an effective barrier to the hinterland of St Agnes in this direction.

5.5 Closer to the village to the north and north-west are the former mining landscapes of Polberro, Higher Bal and Wheal Coates and to the east are the Blue Hills and Wheal Kitty; here the landscape is epitomised by low heather and gorse scrubland with scattered cottages, smallholdings and rock-strewn mine remains.

5.6 Beyond Blue Hills lies the dramatic scenery of Trevellas Coombe and the grassy plateau that forms the Trevellas airfield and grazing land. To the south, the land is a maze of small fields and scattered mining remains.



Fig 3. View towards St Agnes Beacon from Penwinnick.



Fig 4. View towards St Agnes Beacon from Wheal Kitty.



Fig 5. Blue Hills seen from St Agnes Beacon, located above the cliffs seen in the background.



Fig 6. To the south of St Agnes, scattered mining remains and a maze of small fields.



Fig 7. View towards Polberro and Wheal Coates from St Agnes Beacon.

6.0 Historic Context

6.1 What's in a name?

The name 'Breanick' or sometimes spelt 'Bryanick' was referred to in the writings of Thomas Tonkin, 1710-20, when he wrote that "to the west of Breanick, riseth, by a gentle ascent, the great Hill, commonly called St Agnes Beacon and Carne Breanick...". Therefore, it would appear that Breanick may be the former name of St Agnes Churchtown (Padel 1988). The obvious reference is to the beacon (hill) that rises above St Agnes on its western side. The Cornish language, bre (hill) + bannek (prominent, peaked) = prominent hill or peaked hill, offers further explanation of the meaning of the term and indeed its relevancy. ('Bryanek' is the modern Cornish spelling used on the St. Agnes Pilot Gig).

6.2 St Agnes Churchtown appears to be a late settlement on marginal land. Situated in a classic location on a spring-line on a narrow plateau in the lee of St Agnes Beacon overlooking a steep valley (identical in topographical terms to other Cornish churchtowns like St Just and St Austell). The church was a chapelry of Perranzabuloe, the first certain reference to the chapel dates from the 14th century.

6.3 By the late 14th century, a substantial church had been built, with a small cluster of cottages around it, and a separate, but modest vicarage and glebe provided.

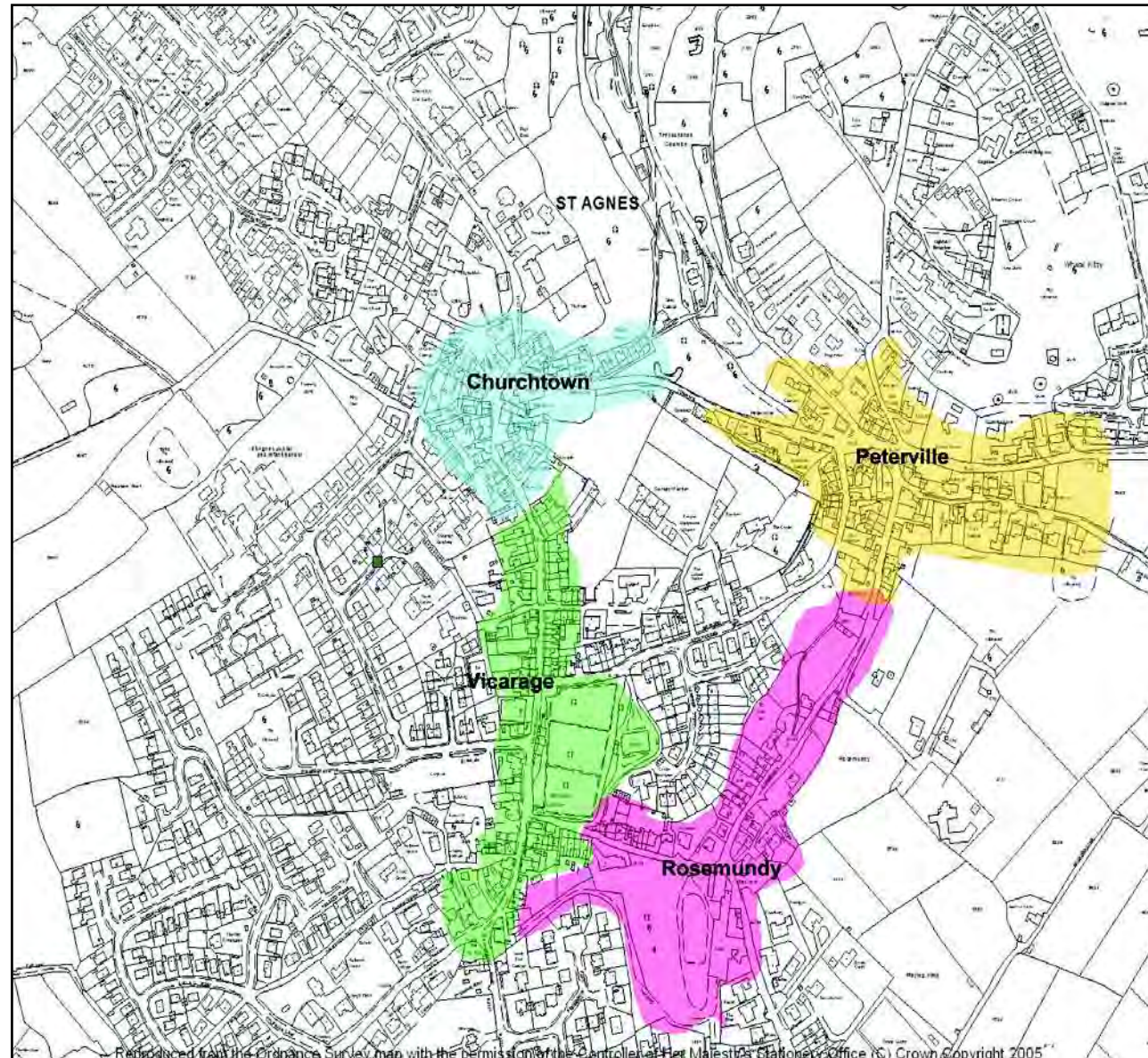


Fig 8. Former Hamlets.

6.4 The 17th century investment of the Tonkin family, culminating in the grant of a market in 1705, ensured that St Agnes was by then the largest settlement, not only in St Agnes parish itself, but also in the older mother parish of Peranzabuloe. Indeed along the whole of the north coast between Hayle and Padstow, the only rival claimant was Newquay.

6.5 The churchtown was only one element in a local topography of scattered farms, smallholdings, hamlets and villages, many of which are difficult to disentangle both physically and in the historical record from the churchtown itself. Present day St Agnes is the amalgam of 4 hamlets (Churchtown, Vicarage, Rosemundy, and Peterville), while others are contiguous with the limits of the modern settlement (Goonown, Goonbell, Trevaunance). See Fig 9. Former Hamlets.

6.6 The different hamlets had by 1809 grown in response to very localised economic forces: the churchtown was near the early exploited and pre-eminent mining area of Trevaunance Bal/ Polberro and the earlier workings on the site of the later West Kitty mine: Vicarage and the associated small holdings along Goonvrea Road were close to Polbreen Mine: Peterville and Rosemundy had their own local mining setts which both spurred on and then constrained development, and settlement grew up during the 19th century at Trevaunance around the harbour, fish cellars, shipbuilding, mills and foundry.

6.7 Areas were characterised by different economic groups who tended to live close to their place of work, Churchtown for instance was home to the professional and Trading classes. Goonown was the principle settlement for miners, whilst 'Stippy Stappy' was originally known as Hitchens Row in the 1850's, as it was owned by the Hitchens family who were merchant ship owners and effectively managed the harbour.

6.8 This settlement pattern was established in 1809 and constrained by the continuing mine workings and the survival of the farmland both around and within the settlement area, it did not expand much beyond its early 19th century limits. (see extracts above from maps dated 1888 and 1908). The development that did occur was largely a matter of filling in between the roads between the neighbouring hamlets, and intensification of development at the core of the hamlets.

6.9 One of the continuing features in the history and character of St Agnes has been its progress towards status as a town rather than a village – this was clearly already an issue in the early 18th century, and the development trajectory of the settlement in the early 19th century was such that, had the boom years of the 1820's – 40's continued, stimulating amongst other things improved harbour facilities, St Agnes would undoubtedly have achieved the urban status that similar nearby churchtown hamlets achieved (e.g. Camborne, Newquay).

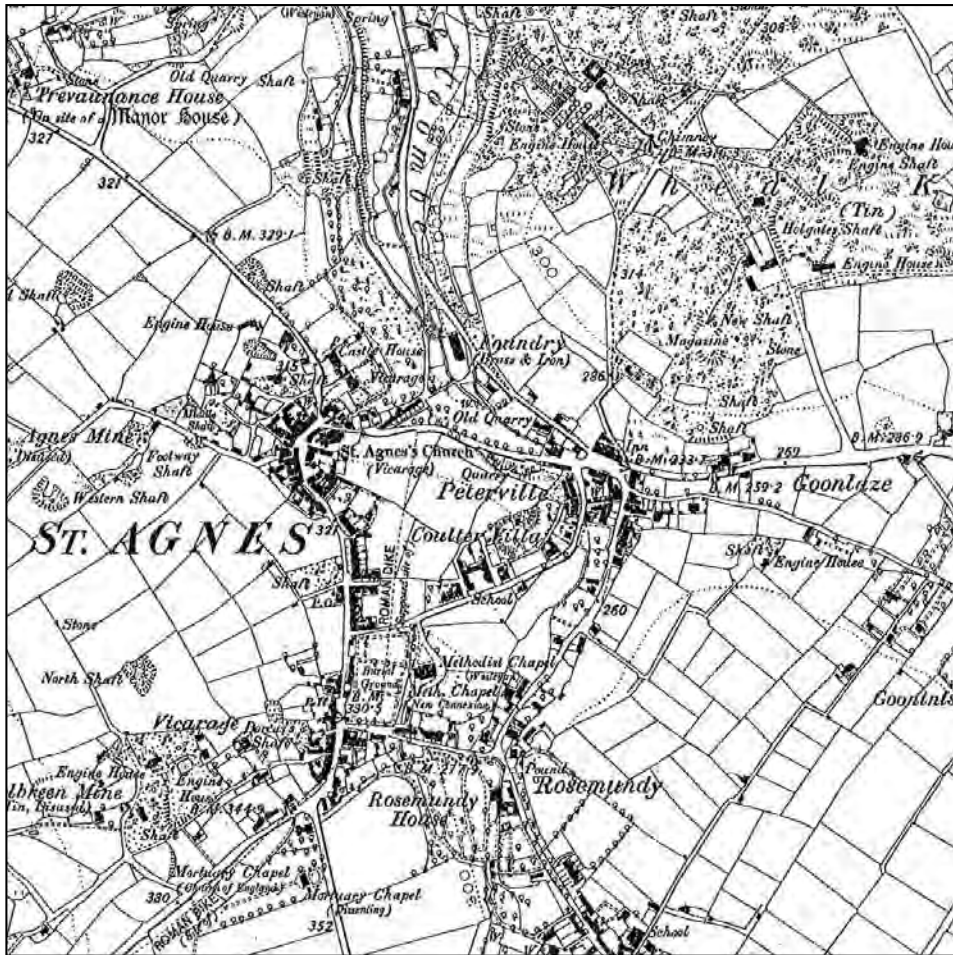


Fig 9. Extract from 'First Edition' 1888 map of St Agnes.

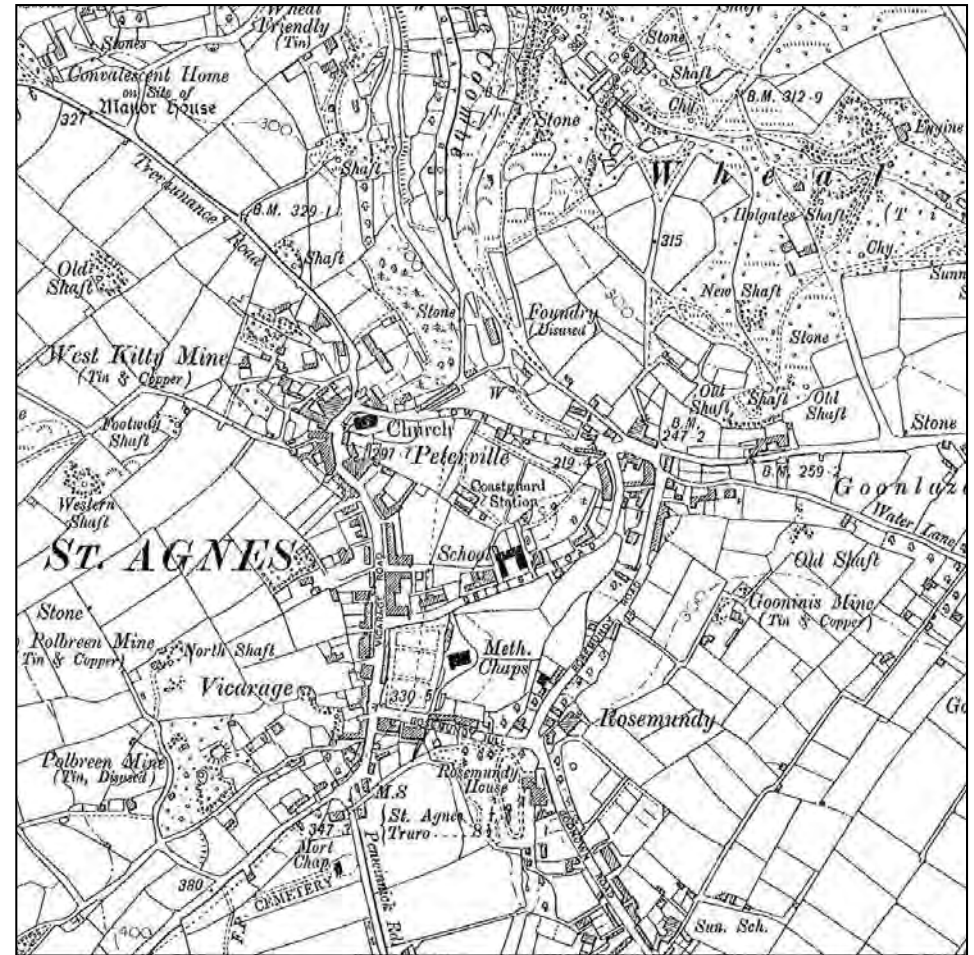


Fig 10. Extract from 'Second Edition' 1908 map of St Agnes.

Urban Grain

The growth of St Agnes has seen a marked change in its morphology from the tight urban grain of Churchtown, Peterville Road and Vicarage Road to the looser, low density housing estates as seen in Fig 8.

7.0 Historic Development of the Area

7.1 Pre 1809

- Churchtown was already densely packed around the church and market place, with a tight network of alleyways known as opeways/opes on the north side in particular, constrained by a back lane at the rear of the plots.
- At Vicarage Road area, there was a group of cottages and record of the Railway Inn (then Smith's Arms).
- In Peterville here was little more than a smithy, a malt house and a non-conformist meeting house (established 1780).
- Trevaunance Coombe was sparsely populated being dominated by the stream works referred to by Tonkin (1720's).
- Rosemundy House, which dates from the 18th century, was the focal point of a small cluster of houses.
- Along the roads between these centres (Town Hill and British Road not existing at that stage) was a string of individual cottages and farms which created a scattered, circular settlement around the dominant central hill (Castle Hill).
- Miner's smallholdings filled the peripheral landscape.

This section is adapted from the Cahill Partnership & Cornwall Archaeology Unit, Cornwall Industrial Settlements Initiative: St Agnes (December 2002).

Key:

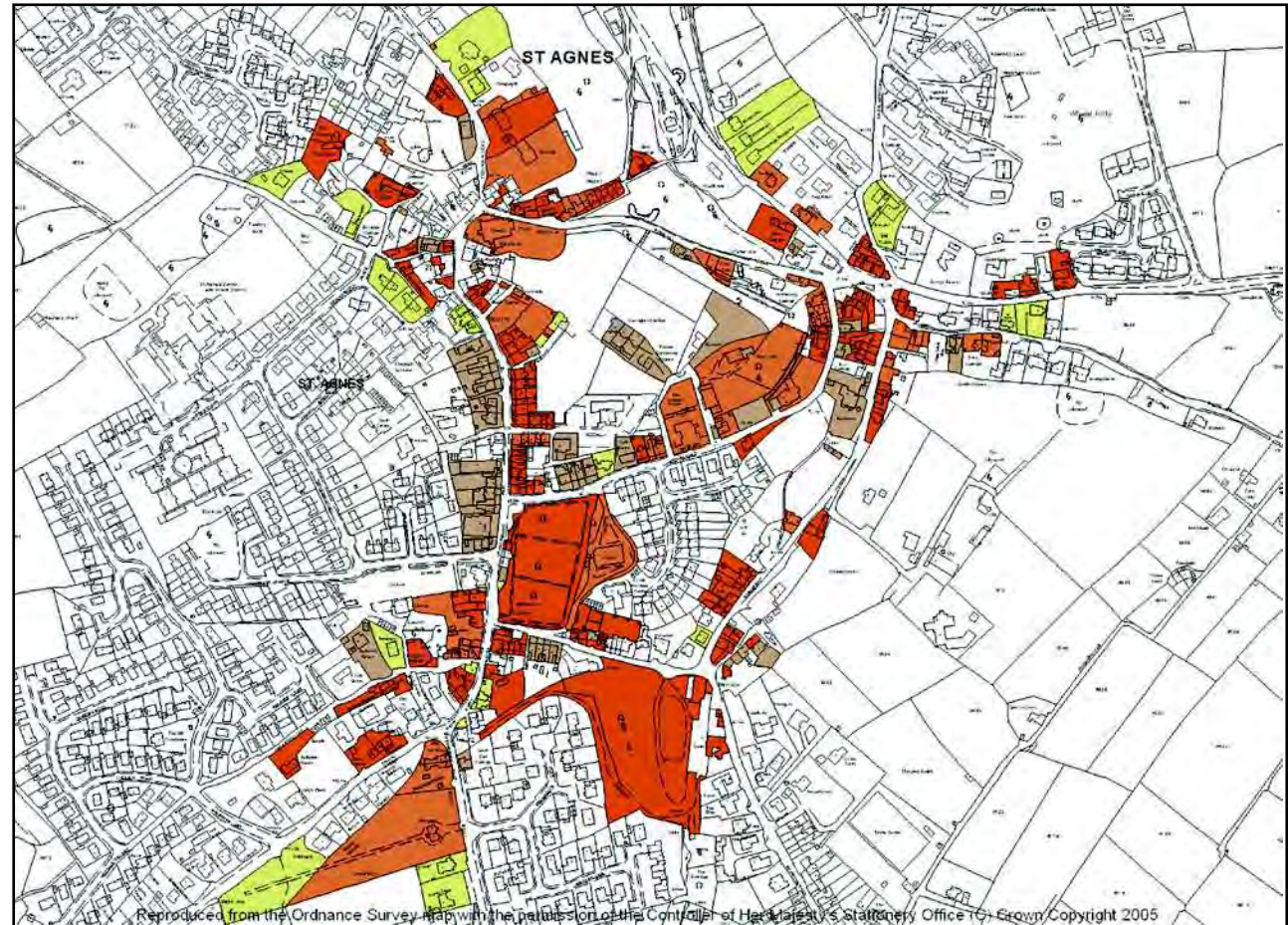
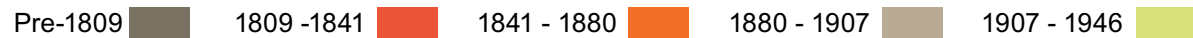


Fig 11. Historic development of the area.

7.1 1809-1841

The Parish population grew from 4161 in 1801 to 7729 in 1841, reflecting the huge scale of contemporary activity in the mines. There was significant building to accommodate this population influx:

- Houses in terraces and rows of modest proportions, yet fine in detail, appeared along the east side of Vicarage Road (space for building was confined by Wheal Rock mine workings on the west side) (Wheal Rock was prior to West Kitty - not to be confused with Wheal Rock, Perranporth. West Kitty opened in 1863);
- The building of the (Methodist) British School marks the beginning of the development of British Road, an area that had hitherto been given over to mining activity (Wheal Harriet);
- Stippy-stappy was half completed by the end of this period, and the rest soon after;
- Many of the cottages in and around Rosemundy date from this time;
- The development of Peterville was connected to the expansion of Wheal Kitty and the Blue Hills conglomerate. The scale of settlement growth, however, remained modest, constrained not only by these mines but also by tin streaming in Trevaunance Coombe and the steep valley sides.

7.2 1841-1880

*“.....the population has decreased since 1871 and emigration is going on and likely to go on to a considerable extent in consequence of the great depression in mining which is the principal service of employment for the inhabitants of St Agnes”
School Board letter to Education Department 1871*

7.3

The population never again reached the peak of 1841, although it continued at relatively high levels until the 1870's tin slump. This led to mass migration and the abandonment of many outlying smallholdings and cottages. While the whole parish population fell from over 6000 in the 1870's to 4267 in 1881, and 4292 in 1901, the population of St Agnes church district remained constant throughout this period. There is literary evidence that St Agnes itself was less severely affected by the decline in employment and prosperity whilst the marginal settlement areas bore the brunt of economic recession. The 1850's and 1860's in particular were marked by a period of construction in the village, particularly of larger public buildings, while the 1870's saw the beginning of the provision of improved public facilities in response to local government reforms:

- The medieval church was largely demolished (the 15th century tower survived) and a new church was built on the same site in 1848 in celebration of St Agnes becoming an independent parish from Perranzabuloe; there was also a new vicarage;

- The Methodist chapel was built in 1860 using stone from Boddy's Quarry at Trevellas Valley and Polberro Quarry. It opened in 1862 to seat 950 people, although attendance figures were more usually in the 200's;
- The rows on the east side of Vicarage Road continued to expand, the west side of the road still being dominated by West Kitty;
- Rosemundy remained static in terms of spatial development, constrained by mines on all sides, although Rosemundy House itself was extended;
- In Peterville there was minor expansion probably related to Wheal Kitty and to quarrying in Town Hill;
- Farming continued to permeate the settlement as the fields and farm at Breannick continued to be farmed in the late 1850's;
- The National School suffered from the decline of population (and income) and was subsequently rebuilt as a Board School in 1872 (architect: J. D. Sedding).

7.4 1880-1906

"In the last 40 years hundreds of cottages have gone down in rural parts, though thousands of acres of common land have been enclosed. No kind of distress exists such as prevails in the west. Our miners go abroad and send home plenty of money to their wives and families and we seldom hear a case of neglect." (Thomas 1896).

There is also reference to land being enclosed in the 1870's around St Agnes Beacon / St Agnes Head.

Tywarnhale Farm (today Teagle's Engineering) became a model farm in the 1860's - 1870's and was the first place in Cornwall to demonstrate ploughing with a pair of traction engines to take in 'down land' This farm also held hedging competitions (which is a good way to get your newly cleared land enclosed!)

7.5

This period saw a change from reliance on an industrial base. West Kitty reached its peak during this time employing 300-400 people. West Kitty also remained steady. At least on local industry - the unquantifiable effect of remittance payments from those who worked abroad clearly propped up the local economy to some degree) and a move towards a wider economic base, including limited tourism. There was continued provision of public facilities and philanthropic gestures, some better quality housing and only a limited expansion in workers' housing:

- The west side of Vicarage Road was developed for the first time despite continued mining; this included not only housing but also the Miners' and Mechanic's Institute (1893);
- British Road was expanded out beyond the school, and the coastguard cottages were built in 1893 - much of this development was in the provision of better quality houses, villas and hotels;
- there was limited expansion at Peterville (especially of better quality houses), with the changing character of the area marked by the former meeting house being used as a coal yard;
- in 1903 the Truro to Newquay railway opened and a station was built, although the station was far south of the village and had little discernable effect on the extent of the settlement.

7.6 1906-46

- There was limited expansion of a new kind - the bungalow - mostly around the settlement edges in Quay Road, and the beginning of estate house construction to the west at Beaconsfield Place.
- In Peterville, the garage replaced the former coal yard, although there was also a hammer mill making ironwork and a small iron foundry.

7.7 Post 1946

- There has been continuation of housing estate development spreading to the west of Churchtown and an accompanying new school.
- New development has been largely on old mine workings and dumps, with the result that much of interest has been swept away, particularly in West Kitty and Polbreen.

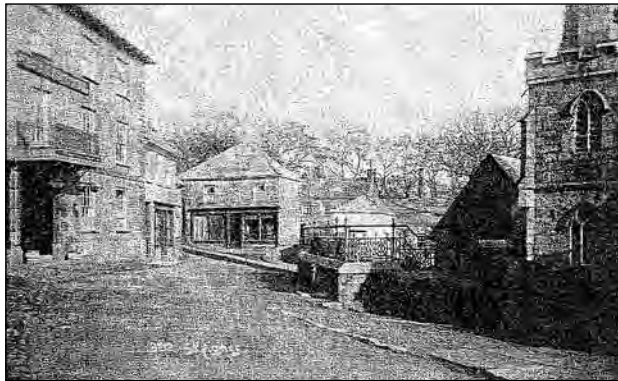


Fig 12. 1925 view looking towards the Bakery, Churchtown. Bakery was destroyed by fire in 1972, the land stood empty until 1980 when the present building was built.



Fig 13. 1924 view, No.6 Churchtown in the right of the picture, formally a shop (as recorded in 1910) today it is Lee & Co estate Agency.



Fig 14 St Agnes Arts building in 1937 a Grocer and Drapers shop. This building has until recently undergone extensive repair and restoration which has created a real architectural gem in the very heart of the town.



Fig 15. Top of Town Hill back to Churchtown circa 1910. In the centre of the picture is no.9 with a barbers pole, (now a dwelling).



Fig 16. St Agnes Post Office circa 1912. The Post Office moved here from Churchtown in 1903. The milk delivery wagon stands outside number 23 Churchtown which at this time was a sweet shop. Today there is no sign of the shop, the building having been changed to a dwelling.



Fig 17. The square at Churchtown around 1928, the shop is still in use as a shop today. The neighbouring property provided board and lodging, today it is a private dwelling house. The square is cobbled, some of which survives today.

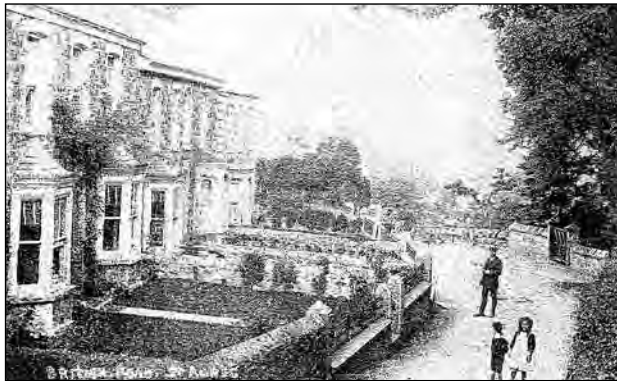


Fig 18. British Road circa 1908, note the planned form and small front gardens with original wrought iron railings, bay windows. Other than small changes to vegetation, the road and perhaps some boundary treatments there is very little difference from today.



Fig 19. Vicarage Road, St Agnes, around 1920, with the unmaded road and cobbled pavement in front of the shops. It is interesting to note that shop use for some of these properties is still prevalent today.



Fig 20. Vicarage Road, 1905. The flag pole erected in the foreground of the Miners and Mechanics Institute erected in 1900 has not survived. The lean-to on the building in the middle of the photograph has also been removed.



Fig 21. Fore Street 1906 looking towards Churchtown with West Kitty engine house on the skyline. It is good to note the survival of much of the front boundary wall treatments and architectural details today.



Fig 22. Goonvrea Road 1905, today one thatched cottage remains the others were destroyed by fire.



Fig 23. Peterville around 1928 showing the wide open area used for many years as the centre of activity (including travelling shows). The remains of the Nonconformist meeting house (Weslyan), built in 1780, on the left hand corner.

Evolution of the Area

8.0 Archaeological significance and potential

8.1 The area as a whole presents a rich historical and archaeological picture of the former mining industry. The area is significant in the remaining; outbuildings, walls, dumps, shafts, cottages, count houses, tracks, leats and interweaving field systems, along with the more obvious 'monuments' of chimney stack and engine houses.

8.2 It is evident that much of the land within the village has been developed for housing without proper archaeological investigation or recording. A detailed archaeological survey of the area is critical to understanding the special character of the historic settlement.

8.3 One of the main issues arising from this appraisal of the St Agnes Conservation Area is the need to undertake a full survey of archaeological potential in St Agnes and the surrounding area to give weight to Local Development Framework policies, ensuring that proper investigation of archaeological potential and recording of archaeologically sensitive sites is carried out before development commences. In effect this would not only provide a knowledge source for users, it would also comply with and strengthen existing and future Local Plan commitments to prevent proposals that would harm the archaeological heritage of the village and mining remains in general, and thereby preserve the special character of St Agnes.

Chapter 2

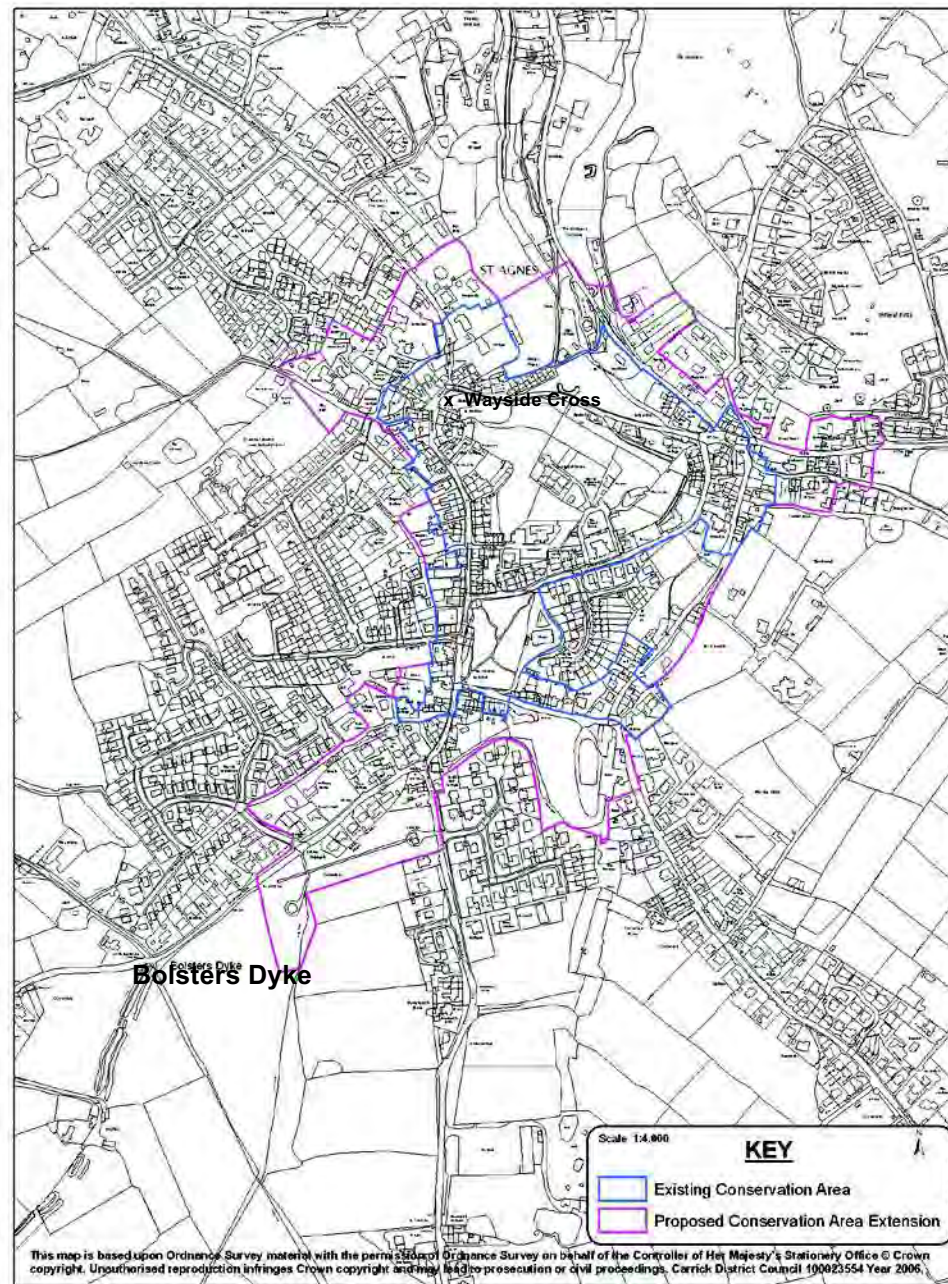


Fig 24. Location of Wayside Cross and Bolsters Dyke.

8.4 Fig 25. pg 19, shows the 2 identified Schedule Monuments in St Agnes, one being the Cross located at the west end of St Agnes Church, and the other is Bolsters Dyke located to the south west of St Agnes village (outside the current and proposed conservation area boundaries): -

- **Bolsters Bank (Dyke)** - includes the extant remains of a linear earthwork referred to on maps of the 20th century as a Roman dyke (probably iron age). It originally enclosed 486 hectares of the St Agnes coastal headland, acting as a landward defence extending for about 3.3km and linking two steep valleys, Chapel Coombe in the south west to Trevaunance Coombe in the north east. Approximately one-third of the monument exists, seen as a bank with an accompanying ditch on its landward side. The rich tin resources on the St Agnes headland, in medieval times could be one reason for the construction of Bolsters Bank in demarcating and protecting a valuable area of land. It also enclosed the most prominent hill for miles (ritual significance in ancient times).
- **Medieval Wayside Cross in St Agnes' Churchyard** - situated to the south west of the church the wayside cross, listed grade II, survives as an upright granite shaft with a round, 'wheel' head mounted on a modern granite base measuring some 1.58m in height. The wayside cross has survived well and is a good example of a wheel headed cross. It is thought to have acted as a waymarker on a church path.



Fig 25. Photograph of Cross at west end of St Agnes Church.

“The character and inter relationship of spaces within the area.”

9.0 Special Character and relationship between spaces

9.1 The central commercial core of the village was located in Churchtown, which includes the Post Office, small supermarket, shops, galleries, hotels and Public Houses (e.g. St Agnes Hotel). A further commercial centre located at the head of Trevaunance Coombe is Peterville, where a small corner shop, wine bar, public house and surf shops front on the main thoroughfare.

9.2 Other than the main chimney stacks and engine houses that protrude above the domestic skyline, the spire of St Agnes Church located in Churchtown is the main landmark building. However, its impact upon the village as a whole is curtailed due to its location on the downward side of the valley slope and it is to some degree concealed from view, especially from the main entrance to the village located on its southern edge.

9.3 The effect of the topography of the area and its historic development has helped to mould the present shape of the village. The amalgamation of the built environment which surrounds and penetrates the village core, all helps to make it an extremely attractive place, locally distinct and special in its character.

9.4 The area is also distinct in its 'organic' and 'planned' parts of the study area that contribute to the overall character. There is for example, a contrast between Churchtown (especially the rear lanes with their intimate alleyways and strangely shaped and reshaped buildings) and the formality of the rows only yards away in Vicarage Road, creating a rich and interesting built environment.



Fig 26. Churchtown/Historic centre.



Fig 27. Churchtown terminating view.



Fig 28. Well maintained Victorian terrace, Vicarage Road.

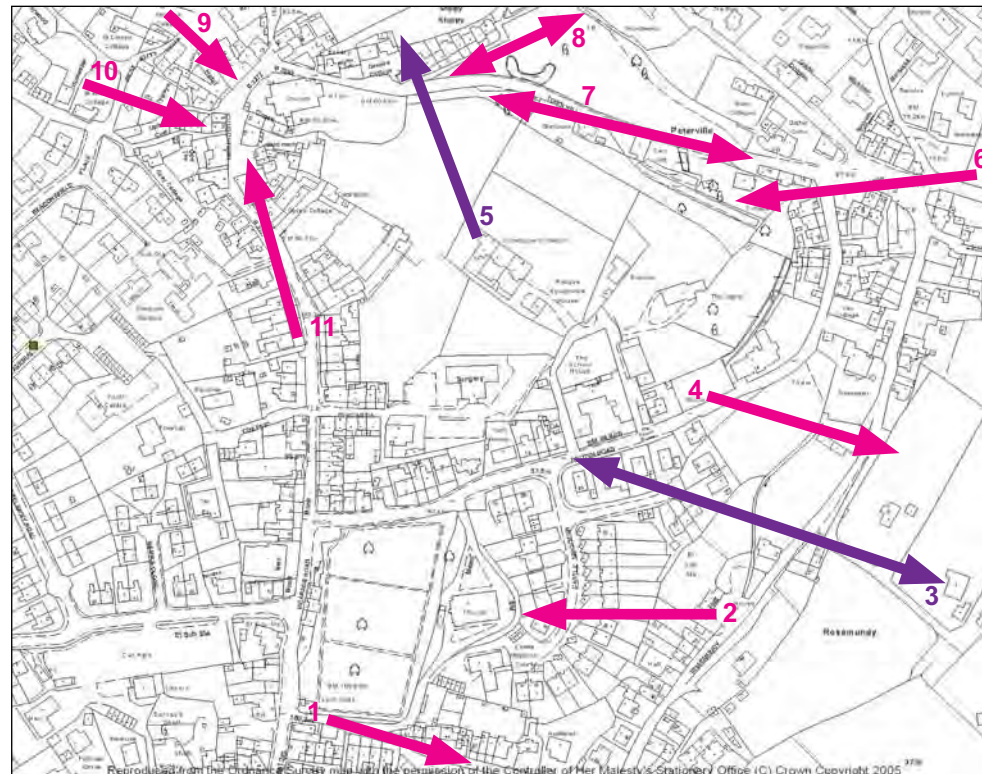


Fig 29. St Agnes Church.

10.0 Key Views & Vistas

10.1 The most common approach to St Agnes is from the south along the main road from the A30 and Truro; this passes through a relatively flat landscape of late-enclosed agricultural land, with only distant glimpses of the sea and the rising presence of St Agnes Beacon promising more interesting landscape. On entering the settlement itself, however, the local topography begins to be more apparent, as the diverse and interesting streetscapes lead visitors into the centre of the village. Once in and around St Agnes, it becomes clear that there are few more picturesquely sited villages in Cornwall, and the dramatic scale and character of the surrounding landscape becomes more insistent. Because of the topography, and the fact that green fields, open spaces and dramatically sloping roads and lanes open up large spaces in the built-up area, there is, aside from along the main village axis itself, always a sense that one is looking over a broad vista, or over a deep valley, or up at well treed hills or the crowning skyline of Churchtown.

10.2 The panoramas around St Agnes reinforce the part played in St Agnes' history by the mining landscape, and beyond that the sea. In every direction there are remains of dumps, engine houses and other mining structures, and always St Agnes Beacon or the sea as a backdrop.



Key
 pink - local
 purple - long
 distance views

Fig 30. Strategic Views within and outside village

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 - Down Rosemundy Hill | 6 - Countryside view towards St Agnes Church spire and village |
| 2 - Rosemundy Road to Methodist Chapel | 7 - Up and down Town Hill |
| 3 - View from British Road towards Gooninis Mine and view from countryside back towards village | 8 - Up and down Stippy Stappy |
| 4 - View from British Road to meadows and open countryside | 9 - From West Kitty lane towards the rear of Churchtown properties and the countryside beyond |
| 5 - From Coastguard cottages towards the sea (Trevaunance Cove) | 10 - From alleyways towards Churchtown |
| | 11 - From Vicarage Road entering into Churchtown |

Views & Vistas

10.3 The same local topography which opens up distant views from within the village centre also makes for many intimate views within St Agnes itself. Even the central areas, the tight network of lanes and back alleys create a series of glimpses and vignettes of great charm which are an essential part of its character. Around Churchtown the dramatic effect of topography is again dominant in the peculiar, if not unusual relationship of the church to the surrounding trees - it is, after all, a rare thing for the top of a church spire to be lower than the surrounding roofscape. The importance of the various eye-catchers, focal buildings and other dramatically sited structures in St Agnes is greater than in many similar sized settlements; this picturesque quality is part of the reason the settlement proved so attractive to tourists in the 19th and as well as the 20th centuries.



Fig 31. Stippy Stappy.



Fig 32. View from British Road towards open countryside.



Fig 33. View from rear of Churchtown towards Church spire.



Fig 34. View from Peterville towards Churchtown.

Urban Morphology

Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment rightly emphasises the importance of regional diversity, local distinctiveness and the harmony between buildings, settlements and landscape.

St Agnes along with many other Cornish settlements has a typical “Cornish” architectural style and local distinctiveness. Despite inappropriate and unsympathetic development, particularly in the twentieth century the original and unique qualities still show through in the local architectural style.

The typical Cornish house is low pitched, slate roofed and built of blocks of grey-brown granite or slate. They appear as simple, straightforward buildings, of good proportions, in harmony with their immediate context and local environment. As Nicholas Pevsner noted in the introduction to his Buildings in Cornwall, “the attraction lies in the whole, not in parts.”

In the case of St Agnes the historic core of buildings (notably within the conservation area) are typical of Cornwall’s architectural tradition. The buildings appear as an integral part of the ‘whole scene’, viewed against the backdrop of a rugged coast, the undulating topography, and steep wooded valleys that lead to the sea. The ‘robust’ buildings have ‘grown’ out of this very environment and they are tailor made for it; designed, for instance, to withstand the force of an Atlantic gale for many generations.

In many parts of Cornwall the scale and nature of much modern development is beginning to dominate the landscape and threaten the delicate, historic relationship between buildings and landscapes which encompass them.

This section explores the key features of St Agnes conservation area, focusing on Building Form; Architectural style and materials; Details and Ephemera; Paving and other hard surfaces; Enclosure – walls, boundaries and edges; Colour; Planting, soft landscape and biodiversity; and Trees.



form



11.0 Form

- Whilst the majority of buildings are 2 storey, there are some single storey bungalows and 3 storey properties.
- Simple rectangular forms are the traditional design of dwellings. Plans are based upon the traditional rectangular form with a simple pitched roof, spanning the narrower dimension, creating a horizontal 'long and low' emphasis.
- 5 metres is usually the minimum depth to traditional dwelling plans.
- Larger or more complex buildings have extensions – usually to the rear e.g. outriggers etc (see diagrams) This helps to break up the bulk of a larger building and gives variation to the townscape form.
- Smaller industrial houses are often arranged in terraces achieving an overall rectangular form
- For the main part facades are devoid of unnecessary elements and projections – apart from (in some instances) porches, bay windows. However, on the whole house plans are characteristically flat fronted.

11.1 Roofs

- Roof shapes are often simple with uncomplicated, long low roofs with simple ridgeline on individual buildings
- Majority of buildings have simple pitched roofs
- Buildings often traditional low ground to eaves height and continuous eaves – ie canopied ceilings internally – rooms in roofspace.

- Roof pitches usually 30-35° with lean-tos being of equal or lower pitch than the main roof
- Roofscape very varied – subtle changes in pitch
- Natural slate roof covering is characteristic and traditional
- Red clay ridge tiles – simple detail
- Eaves and verges clipped tight against buildings
- Uninterrupted eaves lines open soffit eaves (not boxed eaves) the norm
- Simple eaves design
- Chimneys along ridgeline – centrally located or at gable ends
- Brick (red/orange) approx size and scale – traditional
- Chimneys add interest to ridgelines and roofscape character
- Internal stacks used rather than projecting externally.

11.2 Facades and Elevations

- Balance between mass and void – traditional buildings have relatively few and small openings in relation to the mass of walling (more solid to void).
- Follow the general rule – local area of windows and door openings should not exceed 1/3 of the total wall area – with a lower ratio on gable ends and north facing walls.

- Corner buildings – openings are on both elevations
- Double fronted buildings – usually symmetrical alignment to openings i.e. 3 windows 1st floor lining up with 2 windows either side of central door on ground floor
- Small dwellings line up but door set to side and details often handed along a terrace to give some variation.

11.3 Dormers, Rooflights and Solar Panels

Dormers

- Some evidence of dormers – mostly pitched small dormers on villas – lined up with openings on a façade and matching style of existing windows

Rooflights

- Evidence of many rooflights – fortunately most are used sparingly and on rear elevations as they detract from the character and appearance of roofscapes
- Some in appropriate i.e. not vertical emphasis or flush to roof covering – so they appear at odds with the building

Solar Panels

- Very scarce – should be located with care particularly on prominent or otherwise sensitive locations.

11.4 Form - Examples of traditional dwelling forms

- ① Traditional rectangular Form 'long and low' emphasis.
- ② Extension to make 'T' plan single storey mono pitch.
- ③ 'Catside' roof single storey extension running length of building usually on the rear.
- ④ Single storey mono pitch side extension - note it is stepped back from main building line.
- ⑤ Two storey pitched roof extension - note it is stepped back from the main building.
- ⑥ Rear extension 'T' plan, two storey pitched roof.
- ⑦ Rear extension could be handed for terrace.
- ⑧ Rare double rear extensions & central valley
- ⑨ M-shaped roof and central valley

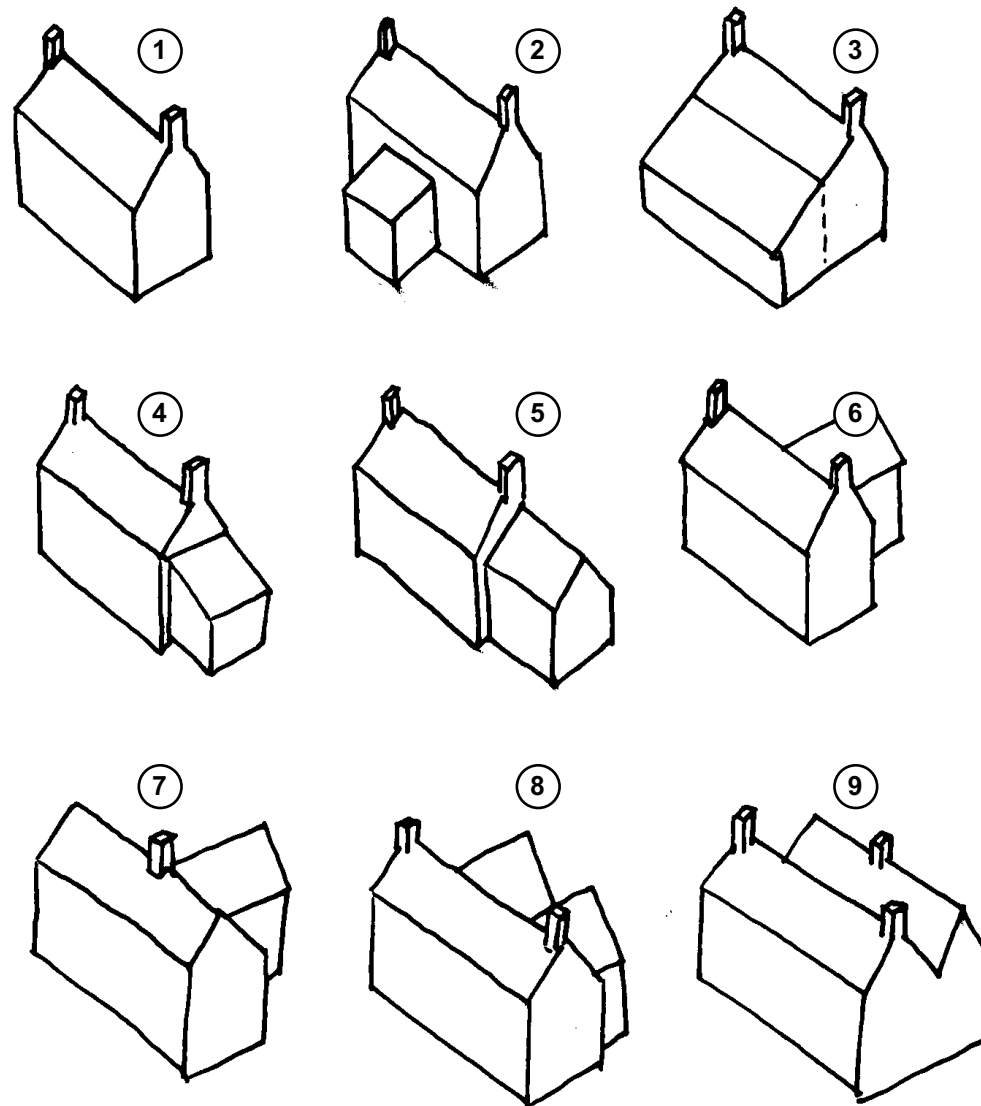


Fig 35. Form



materials
& local
details



12.0 Materials & Local Details

12.1 St Agnes is a stone built settlement. For the most part, the stone used is the local country stone, or 'killas', varying in colour from grey-green to a buff or rich reddy-brown, relatively friable and laid as rubble or roughly coursed. Many of the older cottages and houses have been rendered, painted or whitewashed (probably quite a prevalent protection measure historically).

12.2 Many more mid 19th century buildings, especially the shops and commercial buildings, were from the outset rendered or stuccoed, with often robust ornamental detailing.

12.3 Granite is used for lintels, cills, quoins and other details, particularly in later 19th century buildings—brick is typically used on later buildings (and, very frequently, timber lintels). C19.

12.4 Brick is used occasionally as a principal building material on later 19th century buildings, and almost universally for chimneys (those on the 17th and 18th century buildings in Churchtown being particularly interesting).

12.5 Ashlar stonework is rare - the Porthvean Hotel and Churchtown Stores are almost the only 18th century examples in St Agnes, although many of the 18th and 19th century buildings in Churchtown are of better quality dressed and coursed stonework than the usual local type, and many of the later 19th century villas show some good quality cut stonework (more often granite than the local sandstones). Good quality stonework of an exceptional type can be found in the traceried windows of the Board School by J D Sedding.

12.6 Fine timber joinery is much in evidence on the many good shop fronts, and is also a feature of many of the 19th century villas (bay windows, door and fenestration surrounds, ornamental barge-boards). Although replacement windows in a variety of styles and materials are common and in some cases particularly intrusive and inimical to historic character, there are still many good surviving examples of original fenestration, particularly sash windows, still surviving – a feature of the settlement.

12.7 Rubble-stone hedges and walls are a feature of St Agnes, often incorporating unweathered mineralised material cast up from the mines.

12.8 Cob was historically much used in the area, particularly before the 19th century and several cottages in and especially on the margins of St Agnes can still be seen built either in part or sustaining from cob.

12.9 Slate hanging is not common in St Agnes, although isolated examples do exist, particularly used on side or rear elevations, or as a later 19th or 20th century cladding of earlier stone/cob buildings. Cornish slate was used as the standard roofing material throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

12.10 A particular feature of St Agnes is the occurrence of thatching; many early 19th century or earlier buildings in the settlement area are still thatched, as is at least one mid-late 20th century house at Peterville.

12.11 There has been extensive replacement of both roofing types in the late 20th century with artificial roofing materials not appropriate to the historic character and quality of the area, although a great deal of original slating (with traditional techniques of random widths and diminishing courses much in evidence) and good quality recent replacement survives.

12.13 The extensive use of cobbles for paving is evident, there is an almost complete absence of granite slabs and granite setts in St Agnes. Unfortunately the granite kerbstones were removed when the County Council made pavement 'improvements' in Churchtown some 10 years ago. They also tarmaced over the mill-stone threshold to Churchtown Arts.