



Perran-ar-Worthal Local History Group

On the 26th of September Steve Hartgroves presented a highly entertaining and profusely illustrated talk at the Village Hall entitled **HISTORIC CORNWALL FROM THE AIR**. This was the first of a series of enjoyable and informative evening talks organised by the PLHG on the history (and archaeology) of the parish and its surroundings areas.

Steve worked for Cornwall Archaeological Unit from 1984 until 2012, and during this time he set up and ran the *Cornwall Aerial Survey Project*, carrying out 100 flights and compiling an archive of over 20,000 images of sites and landscapes of all types and periods. In this talk, Steve explained the techniques of aerial archaeology and demonstrated the many ways in which 'APs' (Air Photos) can be used to explore, interpret and illustrate the amazing sites and landscapes that make our county so distinctive.

One of the most interesting aspects of the talk was Steve's illustrations of the ways in which 'new' sites – especially prehistoric settlements - can be discovered through the effect that buried walls and silted-up ditches can have on the vegetation growing over them, creating elusive shadows in low sunlight, and enigmatic circles and crop marks that may only show themselves for a few days as the crop ripens, and then only from certain angles.

The uninterrupted overview of a block of landscape that APs provide has many uses – the images help to unravel the complex patterns that make up multi-phase landscapes or townscapes, and enable us to better understand their development, and to appreciate their natural context and landscape setting. They also enable us to assess the state of preservation of often-fragile sites, to identify threats to their survival, and to monitor their changing conditions.

Above all though, Steve's images were a visual treat; from cliff castles hanging over angry seas, to field systems in continuous use for over two thousand years, to the giddy vastness of the china clay pits, and the curious spectacle of the Eden Project's crystalline biomes, this talk provided a fascinating introduction to the incredible longevity, diversity and sheer loveliness of the Cornish landscape.