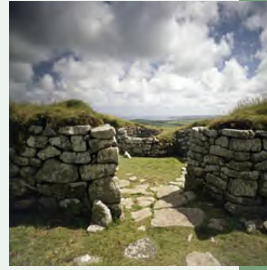


TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE

Chysauster is one of the finest examples of an Iron Age settlement in the country.



HISTORY

ALSO AVAILABLE
TO DOWNLOADINFORMATION
ACTIVITIES
IMAGES

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

This ancient settlement was probably first occupied about 2,500 years ago, in the Iron Age period, but all of the houses visible today were built in the Roman period, in the second and third centuries AD. It was probably a much larger settlement than the remains that are visible today – only a small area of the site has been excavated by archaeologists.

The people of Chysauster lived under the influence of the Roman empire. While Roman-style goods such as pottery have been found here, there is no evidence to suggest that the Romans occupied west Cornwall. The Romans did occupy areas further east, across the River Tamar.

Chysauster was part of a series of stonewalled settlements in the West Penwith area. Three key elements make up the stonewalled settlements of west Cornwall. These are:

- Courtyard houses.
- Fogous (caves).
- Location within sight of a hillfort.

The reasoning behind the close proximity of the settlement to the hillfort has long been debated by archaeologists. Some believe that the villagers worked for the leaders or elite who lived in the hillfort. Others think that the hillfort may have been used by the villagers as a place of refuge, a storage and distribution centre for goods or as a place for gathering together as a larger community.

The purpose of the fogou is also debated. Interpretations include:

- A ritual building.
- A hiding place.
- A cold store.

Any one of these interpretations may be true, although many archaeologists now believe that the amount of effort put into the construction of the fogou indicates a ritual function.

The people of Chysauster were farmers, with archaeological investigations revealing that cereal crops were grown in the fields surrounding the village. Archaeologists used pollen records to find out that this area was once covered in oak and hazel woodland which was cleared long before the village was established, providing space for agricultural activities. Due to the acid conditions of the soil, no bones survive, but it is highly likely that pigs and goats were kept by the settlers. To supplement their income, the people of Chysauster may also have sourced tin from the local river.

The reason why the settlers left the village is unknown. It appears, however, to have been a peaceful departure, perhaps brought on by a decrease in population or availability of fuel.

BOOKING AND SITE INFORMATION:



TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE

CONSTRUCTING THE VILLAGE

Our understanding of how the site was built comes from a series of excavations which took place in the 19th and 20th centuries. Archaeologists have supplemented these studies with investigations at similar sites in Cornwall.

The site is approached by a fairly steep slope where nine houses have survived. Five of these houses are reasonably well preserved and should be identifiable to students. Each house has an artificially flattened and banked area which was presumably used as a kitchen garden.

Access to each of the houses is through a main entrance that points north-east, away from the prevailing wind. The walls on either side of the entrance are very thick, and there is some evidence to suggest that they were originally tapered towards each other and joined by a lintel.

The Courtyards

The main entrance of each house led into a central courtyard, which may at one time have been paved. If these areas were paved, the stones are now gone and were probably reused elsewhere for building on this or another nearby site. It is unlikely that these large spaces were completely covered by roofs, meaning that part of the house was probably open to the sky!

Inside each courtyard is a series of doorways leading into rooms which are built into the thickness of the walls. All houses had a large recess on the left-hand side immediately inside the entrance. It has been suggested that this recess might have been used to shelter livestock or alternatively as an area for craft activities that would have increased the income of the household. Some houses also had an additional small room next to the recess just inside the entrance.

Rooms within the Houses

The doorway opposite the main entrance leads into what was normally the largest room in the house. These are the rooms within the houses where the majority of the artefacts have been found, which suggests this was probably the main living space.

Further rooms include the long room, which in some houses (3b, 4 and 6) has been divided into two individual rooms with separate entrances. The room may have been split when a family increased in size, perhaps through a marriage. There is, however, no concrete evidence that this was the case.

Facilities within the Houses

All of the houses were served by a series of water channels, some of which are still visible today. These channels appear to have brought clean water into the house, as well as clearing foul water away. The latter would have been especially important if livestock were kept within the houses.

Roofing the Houses

While we know that the houses were roofed, so little of the roofing survives that it is difficult to know exactly how it was constructed. Archaeologists in the 19th-century described the smaller rooms as being roofed by a series of overlapping stones, a technique known as corbelling. Excavations at the site have unearthed several pieces of slate, but these were rejected as roof tiles as too few were found. Slate is not local to the area and would have been an expensive commodity; it is unknown what it was used for at Chysauster.

Archaeologists have rejected corbelling as a roofing method for the larger spaces, mainly because they did not find enough roof stone to cover these areas. Most probably the larger rooms were roofed with timbers and then covered in either turf or thatch. In every round room so far excavated, a stone with a hollow in it has been found which might have supported a timber upright for the centre support of a pyramidal roof.

TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE

HISTORICAL SOURCES

JT Blight, *Archaeological Journal*, 1861

'Though the huts are still pretty entire, they are not so perfect as they were in 1849, many of the larger stones have been carried away for modern buildings, and it is to be regretted that similar acts of destruction have been recklessly practised, to the serious injury of other antiquities in the country.'

Lake's *Parochial History of the Country of Cornwall*, 1868

'Near the farm-place called Chysauster, the house on the south, are some rude remains of stonework, supposed to have been ancient British residences. They consist of rough walls, indifferently put together without cement of any kind. On the hill are the ruins of seven or eight of those huts, some in a better state of preservation than others. They are constructed in this manner, – there is a thick elliptical wall, faced outside and inside with stones; within its thickness are formed four oven-like compartments. In these the stones overlap each other gradually as they approach the top, giving the interior the appearance of a bee-hive. The compartments are entered from an open space or courtlage, which has a main entrance facing eastwards. The ruins of many other enclosures occupy the immediate vicinity. A little way down the hill are terraces, formed by cutting away the acclivity. On the hill side is an ancient cave in which it is supposed the natives secreted their property, and hid themselves in time of danger.'

WC Borlase, *Archaeological Journal*, 1873

'Turning to the right, we first of all ascend by a paved way into the circular hut, 14ft in diameter ... From the scarcity of stone in the area of this hut, it can hardly have possessed a roof of that material ... Five feet from the southern end [of the long room], the workmen discovered, in the eastern wall, a narrow entrance, 2ft wide, with a pillar on either side, opening into a most remarkable little structure. It is oval, 7ft long and 4ft 9in broad, and built, like the caves, partly in an excavation in the natural soil. The original walling rises to a height of 4ft, above which a layer of stones point inwards to receive a "beehive roof". Eight of these roofing stones are still in their place, and the remainder of the dome we removed from the interior ... we found a seventh and last chamber, 7ft in diameter, whose stone roof falling in had crushed out the door posts ...'

These sources give you an indication as to what the 19th-century archaeologists discovered when they first explored the site.

TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE



INFORMATION

ALSO AVAILABLE
TO DOWNLOADHISTORY
ACTIVITIES
IMAGES

LOCATION

Chysauster Ancient Village is at Newmill, Penzance TR20 8XA.

OS Map Reference: SW 46962 34752.

HOW TO GET THERE

Bus First 16 via Zennor (New Mill – 1.5 miles);
First 16 (Castle Gate – 1.75 miles).

Rail Penzance – 3.5 miles.

FACILITIES

Parking Free, on-site parking for cars and coaches. Parts of the approach road are rather narrow for coaches and extra care is needed.

Disabled access Very limited at the site.

Shop A limited amount of merchandise is available at the ticket office.

Toilets Located in the car park, but there are no dedicated disabled facilities.

Picnics Welcome in the grounds.

LEARNERS GO FREE

Educational visits are free to English Heritage properties and should be booked at least 14 days in advance via the Education Bookings Team:

0370 333 0606

bookeducation@englishheritage.org.uk

www.english-heritage.org.uk/onlinebooking

Please remember that you are responsible for completing your own risk assessment. Hazard information is available on the website when booking.

Limit on party number 100 on site at any one time.

Required teacher/adult helper to pupil ratio 1:6 for KS1 and below, 1:8 for KS2, and 1:15 for KS3 and above to the age of 18. Pupils must be supervised at all times.

Adult learning groups must have a designated leader.

A GUIDE TO RESOURCES

A Chysauster Ancient Village guidebook is available and can be purchased through the English Heritage website. Present your booking permit when making a guidebook purchase on site to receive a 20% discount – this is not available online.

Chysauster and Carn Euny

English Heritage, 2001

ISBN 9781850744528

BOOKING AND SITE INFORMATION:

 0370 333 0606 bookeducation@english-heritage.org.uk www.english-heritage.org.uk/onlinebooking

TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE



ACTIVITIES

ALSO AVAILABLE
TO DOWNLOADHISTORY
INFORMATION
IMAGES

PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

We recommend that you take advantage of our free planning visit scheme to familiarise yourself with the site, and to prepare any activities that your group may undertake.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

These short, informal activities work as icebreakers for Key Stage 1 to 3 visitors to Chysauster Ancient Village. Mix and match the activities to introduce key concepts and vocabulary to your students.

Word Bank

A word bank is a great way to encourage students to improve their vocabulary, literacy skills and knowledge while providing a focused walk. Explore the remains of the settlement, asking students to note down words associated with a specific theme, such as textures, sounds or colours. In small groups ask the students to share the words they have banked. These words can then be used as a starting point for developing a piece of creative writing or a poem about the visit, where devices such as onomatopoeia and alliteration can be introduced.

Shape Spotter

Similar to the word bank, create an image bank of the shapes your group comes across, complete with name and descriptive words.

Get to Know the Site

As an icebreaker, set the students a series of short challenges to help them get to know the site better.

Dividing the students into small groups, and providing each group with a digital camera, ask them to find and record:

- A place to keep dry.
- A way to dispose of waste.
- A place to shelter animals.
- A place to get water from.

To extend this activity, ask the group to develop a display back in the classroom. Students could develop a pin board display, highlighting the locations of their photographs on a map of the site.

Freeze Frame

Assemble your group in one of the courtyard houses. Imagine what life here might have been like, and what might have been going on in each of the rooms. Explain some of the household jobs that families living here might have done, such as:

- Looking after animals.
- Grinding corn.
- Making shoes.
- Cooking.
- Looking after children.
- Weaving cloth.
- Making tools.

Ask students to choose a job or scene from life back then and act it out. Create a tableau, or freeze frame. Take a photograph of the scene for a display or for further work back in the classroom.

BOOKING AND SITE INFORMATION:



TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE

Reconstruction

With KS3 students you may want to look at the site as a tourism destination. Ask the students to consider the following questions:

- Would a reconstructed house, or roof, help visitors to understand what life may have been like at Chysauster? If they think a roof would have been a good idea, what material and style would they use to build it? You may want to refer back to the History section in this pack to discuss this further.
- What positives and negatives can they see from reconstructing a house?
- What other facilities might they add to the site?

To extend this activity, give the students a budget to work towards and ask them to provide a breakdown for any works they wish to undertake.

Archaeologists for the Day

If you are visiting at the start of a longer project about archaeology, you may want to present the site to the students through the eyes of an archaeologist. After introducing methods of historical enquiry and assessment in the classroom, bring the students on site without explaining where they are going. Once on site, break the students up into small groups and ask each team to explore the site, looking for clues as to what it was, who lived there, and when.

You may want to set questions such as:

- What do they think the site is – a village or fields with dry stone walls?
- If the remains are buildings, were they for animals, people, or both?
- If people, how many lived in each house?

- Were the houses defended?
- Where did people get their water?
- Why was the site abandoned?

Each group should present their findings to the wider class.

As an extension to this activity, divide the class into groups and allocate a house to each group. Ask students to draw a plan of the house. They can then use tape measures or metre rulers to measure the size of the house and rooms, and record the measurements on their plan.

Tour of the Site

After taking part in the above activity, ask students to develop a tour of the site aimed at either visitors or future settlers. Using video equipment you have brought with you, each group could highlight their favourite areas, historical knowledge and reasons why people should visit or settle here. They may wish to promote the location, autonomy from the Romans and local resources as reasons to settle here.



TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE

Changes at the Site

To discover what life may have been like at Chysauster, and how it has changed, ask the group to sit in silence for five minutes. The students should then:

- Listen – what can they hear? Are there any sounds that the original settlers would have heard? What modern sounds can they hear?
- Look – what can they see, and how far?
- Feel – what can they feel at the site? Have textures changed since the settlers came, e.g. materials used to build paths for visitors?

You could then refer back to a modern map and ask the students to plot what they have seen from the site. Alternatively, they could use the sounds they have heard to create a piece of music back in the classroom, or as the start of a piece of creative writing.

Geography

Divide the class up into small groups. Provide the students with the plan of the site in the Images section of this pack, along with a modern map. Ask the students to consider how the local area has changed since the Iron Age. For example:

- How have the local towns and cities developed during this time?
- What changes to local infrastructure have taken place.
- Has the commercial activity in the area changed?

The group should then discuss whether they would choose to build a modern-day settlement here, bearing in mind contemporary resources.

Nature Trail

Chysauster is close to several Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Before your visit collate a selection of traps, magnifying glasses and nets to catch minibeasts and insects. Ask your students to conduct a survey of the local insects that they find on site. They will need to:

- Identify each insect.
- Record it.
- Take a photograph of it.
- Return it to the wild.

Your students should then develop a piece of work on this, for example a leaflet highlighting the animals that people can see at Chysauster.



ENGLISH HERITAGE
EDUCATION

TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE



IMAGES

ALSO AVAILABLE
TO DOWNLOAD

HISTORY
INFORMATION
ACTIVITIES

An aerial view of the site.



© Skyscan Balloon Photography. Source: English Heritage Photo Library

BOOKING AND SITE INFORMATION:

 0370 333 0606

 bookeducation@english-heritage.org.uk

 www.english-heritage.org.uk/onlinebooking

TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE

An artist's impression of how the houses might have been about 2,000 years ago.

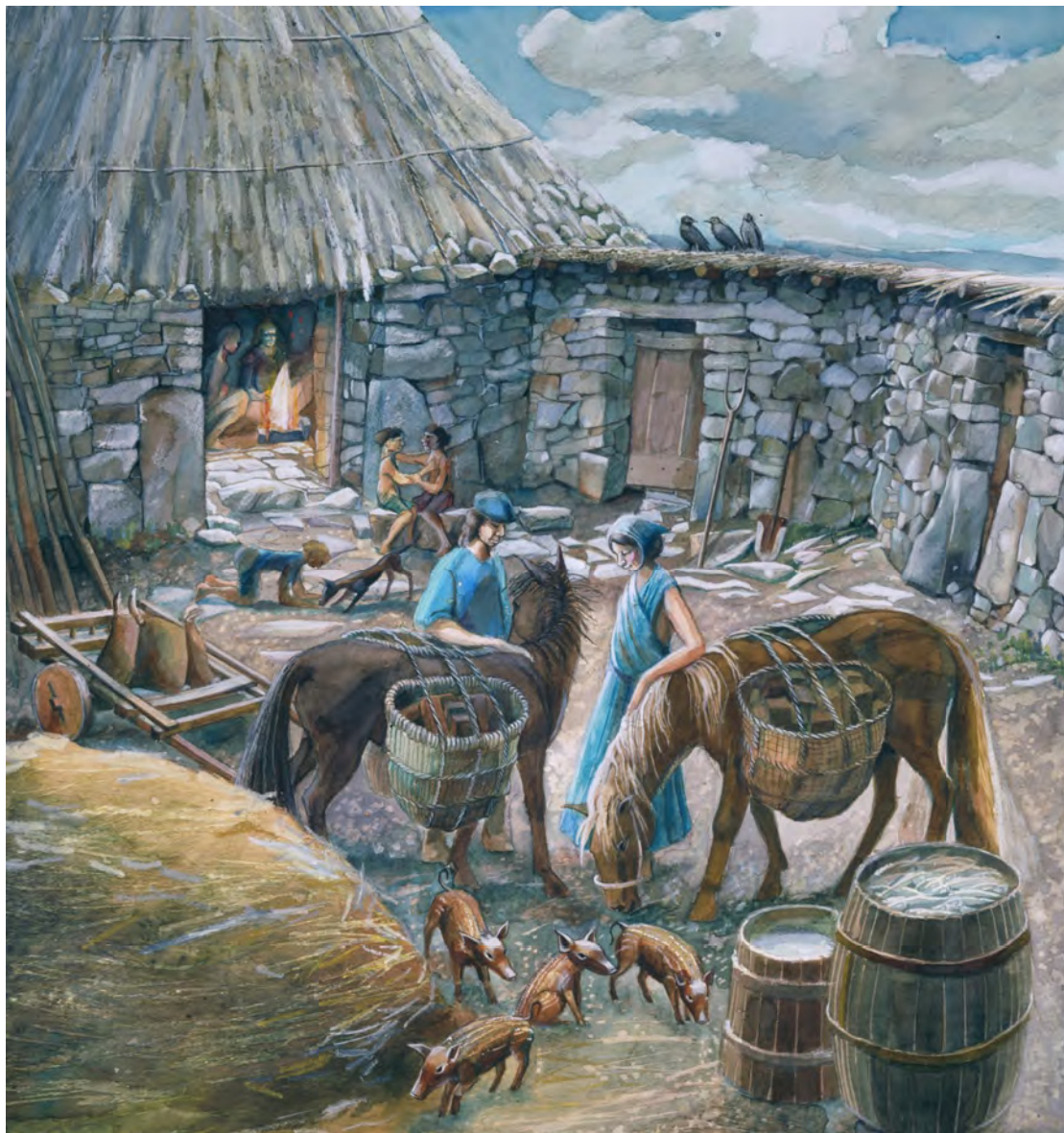


© English Heritage Photo Library: Judith Dobie, English Heritage Graphics Team

TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE

A reconstruction drawing of inside one of the courtyard houses, showing people and livestock.



© English Heritage Photo Library: Judith Dobie, English Heritage Graphics Team

TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE

The entrance to one of the houses.



© English Heritage Photo Library

TEACHER'S KIT

CHYSAUSTER ANCIENT VILLAGE

A plan of the site drawn by the Ministry of Works in 1967 – the layout of the site remains the same today.



© English Heritage Photo Library