

# Bosherston Folk Lore

Copy of a book written by a Bosherston schoolteacher  
Mrs Evans about 1930

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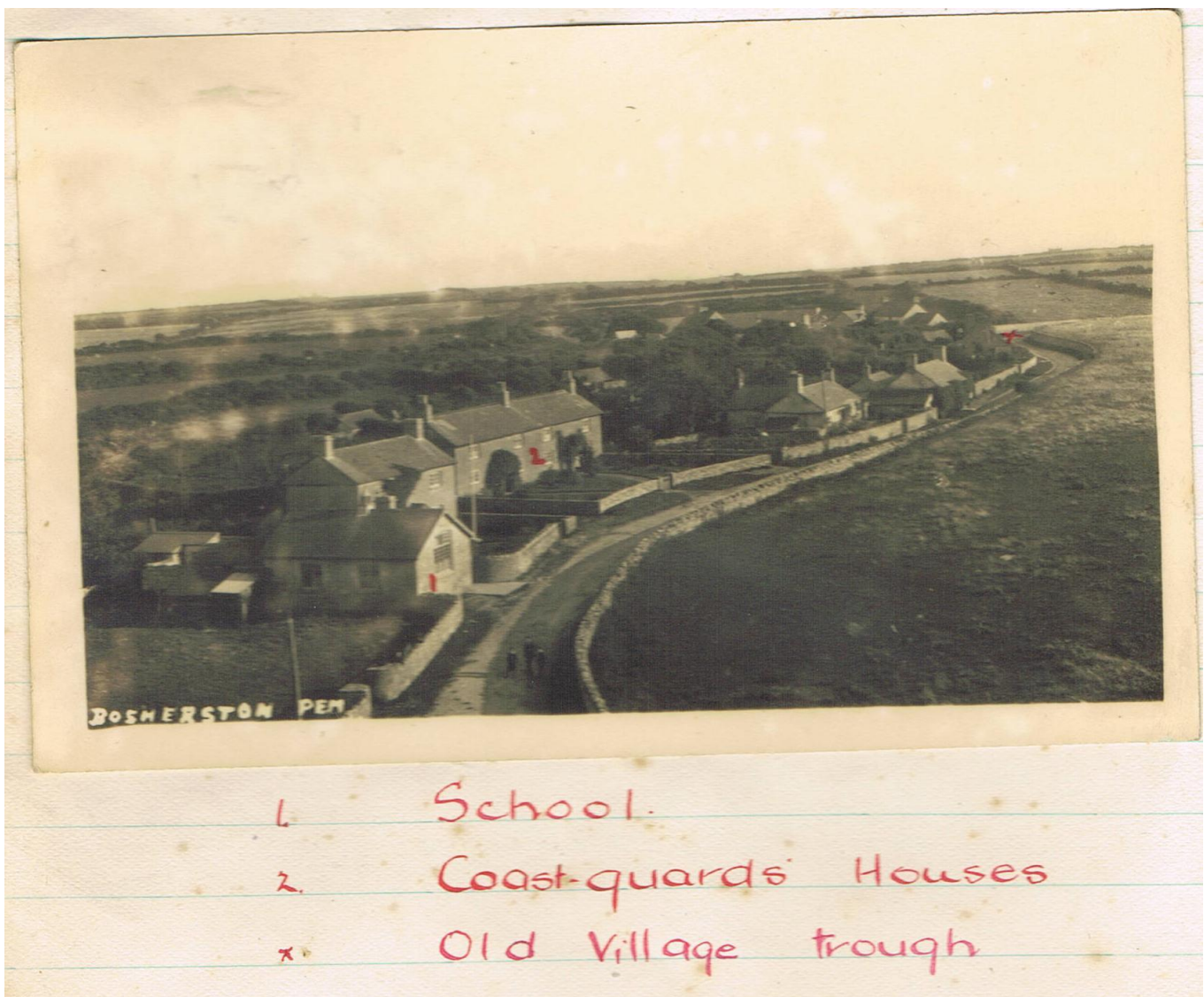
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### An Appreciation of Bosherton

Bosherton is the Beersheba of Pembrokeshire – making the southern limit of village communities in the south west county. Its air savours of the salt sea. It is curtailed off from modernity by remoteness and other things. It is capable of great things for it manages – and manages well – without a policeman. East and south and west, for generations, has the Atlantic thundered at its walls and fortresses, and Bosherton sleeps secure within its impregnable and eternal walls. Unique is the only word that suits it altogether. There are not contradictory and conflicting statements painted in all colours to boom the quality of the goods sold in various shops. For there are no shops. There is not a shop. There is not even a single sweet shop to tempt the nimble penny from the pocket of the willing schoolboy who elsewhere goes to shop with a sheen in his eyes, and in his heart a belief in the illimitable power of the single metal disc in his pocket. Beersheba has no public house, and, as far as I know, no faith in it, or hope from it or demand for it. Bosherton is “dry” of its own accord and to its own advantage. For the day tourist Mr Sketch’s mineral water must and do suffice.

Mr Timmins in his well-known work “Pembrokeshire Nooks and Corners” refers to Bosherton as the “Ultima Thule” of Pembrokeshire, provoked there to probably by the width of the margin between it and that artery of civilisation which might be called the Artery Stephensonia. Ultima (I am told) means last. The London nerve weary tripper in his wisdom declared for the west, but unwisely put a full stop after Tenby. Bosherton should have been the last word. The motorcar in the fullness of time came to Bosherton: the syllable “change” was then uttered into the vibrant air, and was dimly heard or felt by those who possess the instinct of the morrow. The future is driving towards Bosherton like a Super Jehu with its strange gifts of transformation.

The winds of the Atlantic in their pristine purity and power have for long ages blessed Bosherton and its people “live long in the land which the Lord, their God, gave them.” The Cawdor family, too, has in the past done much for the villagers, giving them magnificent gardens which they cultivate “with all their soul and all their strength and with all their mind”. The produce of these gardens finds a ready market in towns between Tenby and Bristol.



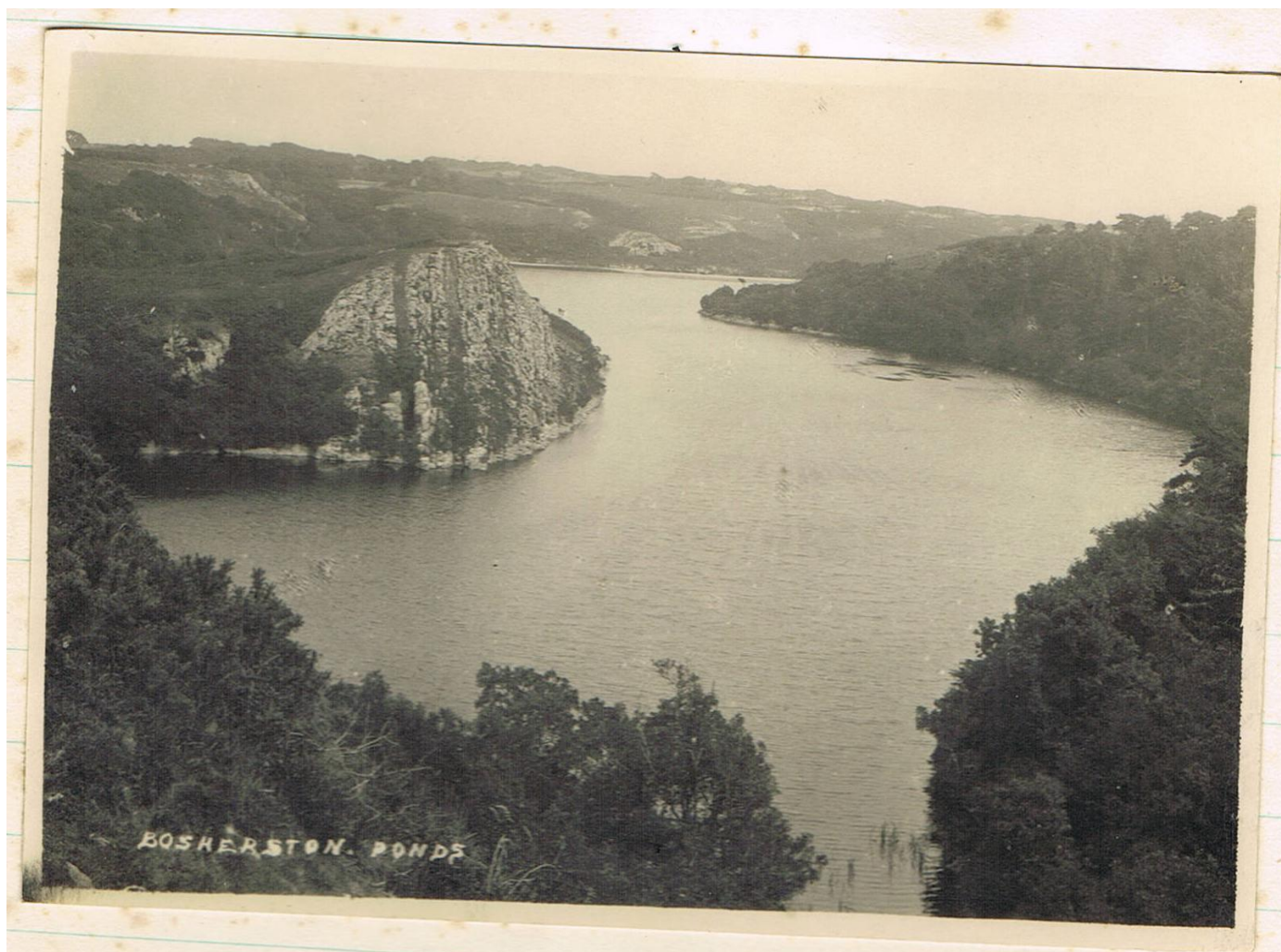
The school was, I believe, erected at the expense of the second Lord Cawdor in 1859, and a rather interesting fact is that the builder was a grandfather of the eminent lawyer and publicist Sir John Simon, who still keeps in touch with South Pembrokeshire. A grandson of the Lord Cawdor who erected the school is on the management of the school, and will doubtless continue to see that the lambs are fed.

Come it soon, come it late, there is a great future to Bosherton as a health resort – a centre of tonicity and recuperation for tired nerves – if the thing is properly planned, the main things not lost sight of, and enterprise second common sense instead of ministering to greed, folly and fatuity. Within five miles in each direction it commands unrivalled sea and cliff scenery surpassing even that of Caernarvonshire and Cornwall in extent, grandeur and variety.



And then there are the spacious solitudes of the springy downs between there and Linney head, where a man may exercise his limbs, counter myopia or "back to the land" with the soothing sound of many waters in his ears, create himself anew for a term of good work.

“See Naples and then die” is a trite Italian saying. You may ride in a motor car through Bosherton and see nothing, but if you once see the beauty to seaward you will not die, but live to see more. My advice is – use, if you can afford it, use a motor car to get to the village, and after use your limbs. What of the “Ponds”? Here near at hand is a scene rarely beautiful Man’s device and thoughtful endeavour enter as factors. But art is duly subordinate to nature and is used to heighten natural effects. And the results baffle expression.



There is much more to be said about Bosherton, and St Govan’s Head – and I hope to write chapter II some day.

I conclude with some lines I have read somewhere. They may have been written by a Lake Poet:

“I gazed – and gazed – but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:  
For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or I pensive mood  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude  
And then my heart with pleasure fills  
And dances with the daffodils.”

E.U.U.

x Stack Rock.



BROAD HAVEN



STENNIS FORD

## **Bosherston or Stackpole Bosher**

Named after “Bosher” one of De Stackpole’s retinue, who in all probability came over with the Conqueror. It is an English district and was so even before the invasion of the Flemmings. Many examples of Viking or Norse names are to be found in this part of the county – Hubberstone, Hubber’s winter quarters; Stennisford, stoney inlet; Mewsford and Thornston, which indicate clearly that the bold rovers of the north found it distinctly attractive. At “Stackpole Bosher” they found a creek after their own hearts, with a rock almost in the centre of the entrance. “Stack” the Viking for a pile of rocks is still used in this part for the same purpose. The sea came up the creek to Pen-y-wen (White headland), to Whitewell and Stackpole Court, or at any rate, to the site on which now stands that building. The wild Northerners therefore termed the creeks “Stack pools”.

It is said that a Jane Bosher lived in the place within the last century but that the last of the name lived in Haverfordwest, and earned his living as a shoemaker.

### **1. Bullslaughter Bay**

Partly forms the boundary of the parish, the eastside of it being in Bosherston, but the west in Warren. It lies some sixty feet below the cliff, its approach being a “gut” or narrow ravine composed chiefly of white clay, years ago very largely used in the making of china. This is a noted hunting ground for the “wreckers” of the village, and many a hen house bears testimony to the quality of timber here washed ashore

### **2. Camp or Cliff Castle**

Locally known as “Buckspool Castles” is one of the finest examples of this kind of fortification to be seen on the Pembrokeshire coast. The lines of defence are clearly defined, and the central pit or cauldron tells its own dark story. Recently antiquarians have made some interesting discoveries in the “kitchen midden” attached to this ancient fortress. Among other things cartloads of shells in an excellent state of preservation were unearthed.





### 3. Huntsman's Leap

So called because a huntsman strange to the locality, jumped the mouth of the opening on horseback. On looking back and seeing the fearful chasm over which he had risked his life, he fell back and died of fright.

The mouth of this strange, gulf like opening is only about 1/30 of its width on the land side.

Like many more of the "attractions" of Bosherston, it is gazed and wondered at by many a tourist. Amongst the names of some noted visitors to a noted spot are those of King Edward and Queen Alexandra, Princess Victoria and the Portuguese Ambassador, who visited it in 1900 on the occasion of King Edward's cruise following his Coronation

### 4. Bosherston Mere

Lies to the west of Huntsman's Leap and might easily be overlooked by the uninitiated. The mouth of the cavity is no more than a yard in diameter, but the depth of it is approximately 70 feet.

When the Mere "works" a noise like thunder can be heard issuing from its dark depths, water can be seen shooting up into the air and altogether a strange phenomena is presented



### 5. St Govan's Chapel

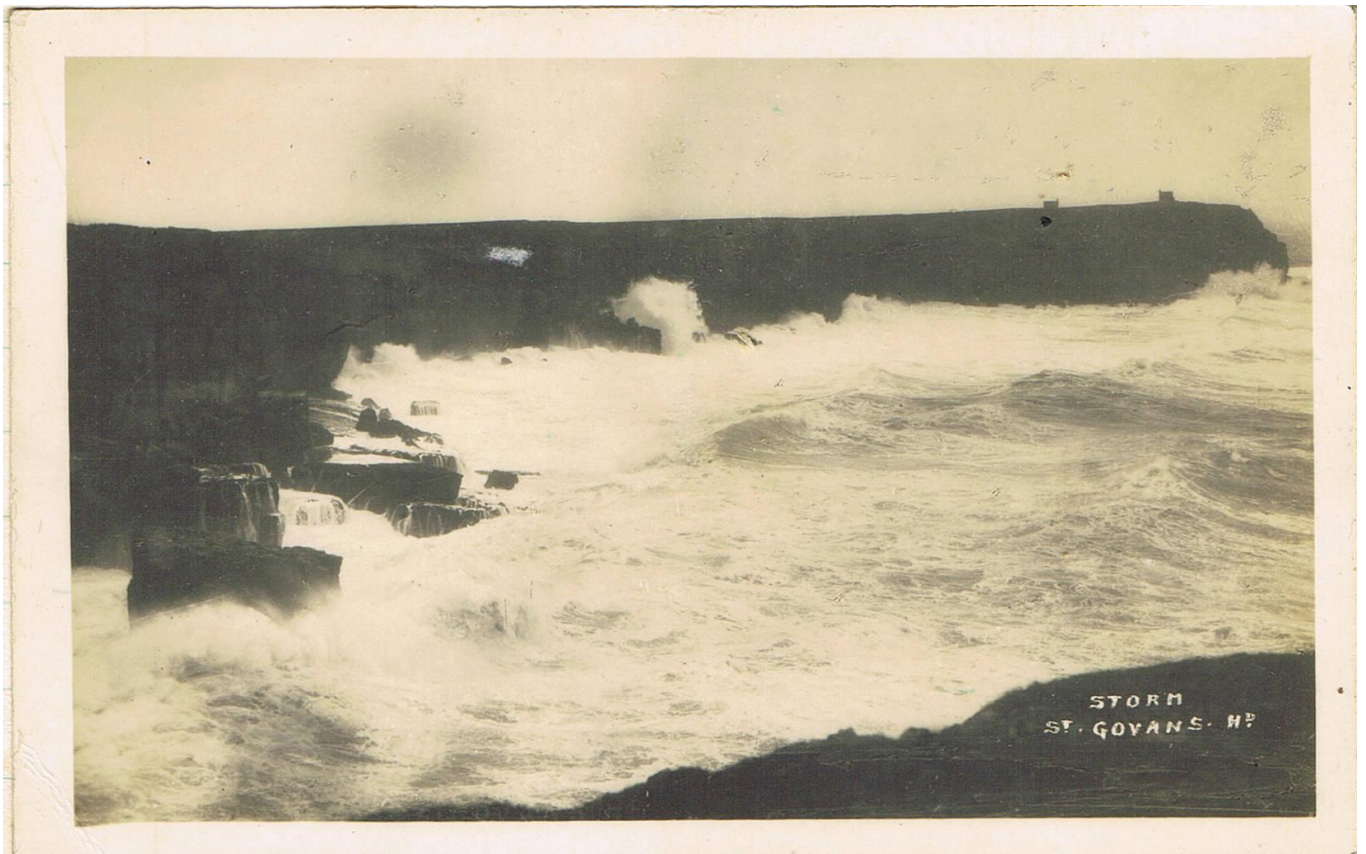
To enter this quaint little building, it is necessary to descend a long flight of steps, which, so says tradition, cannot be accurately counted by mortal being. The Chapel is very simply constructed having a nave 27' long. In the east may be seen a stone altar; in the southern wall a priscina above which is a deep aperture resembling one to be found in St Mary's Church, Pembroke. A low arch in the eastern wall to the north of the altar leads into a small cell formed in the rock. This is supposed to have been one of our Lord's places of refuge. It is also popularly believed that St Govan sought shelter here when he was forced to hide from the fierce pirates who landed here. The rock to the left of the altar would open, and inside, in a hollow just big enough to enclose him, the saint would remain till the danger was over.

The marks of a man's ribs are to be seen impressed on the rock. It is said that if a person enters this cell, turns around nine times and wishes, his request will be granted. Would that wishes could be realised so easily!

Under the north side is to be found a well, the water from which can only be procured in a limpet shell, drop by drop. Many visit the place to obtain some to cure bad eyes.

Outside the Chapel, a few yards nearer the sea, is a rudely constructed well, the water and clay from which are supposed to cure bad legs.

A rock, which has recently been destroyed by vandalism, but which can still be distinguished from its neighbours, was once the resting place of the Chapel Bell, and received its virtue. Even to day it gives forth a very sweet sound if struck by a stone and is therefore termed "The Bell Rock".



St Govan by A.G. Prys Jones HMI 1920

St Govan he built him a cell  
By the side of the Pembroke Sea,  
And there as the crannied sea-gulls dwell  
In a tiny, secret citadel  
He sighed for eternity.

-----//-----

St Govan he built him a cell  
Between the wild sky and the sea;  
Where the sunsets redden the rolling swell  
And brooding splendour has thrown her spell  
On valley and moorland lea.

-----//-----

St Govan still lies in his cell  
But his soul, long since, is free,  
And one may wonder – who can tell-  
If good St Govan likes Heaven as well  
As his cell by that sounding sea.

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#### 6. New Quay

In one of the caves of this beautiful little inlet, have recently been discovered the fossils of a man, woman and a child. That of the man can easily be distinguished but only the eyes of an experienced person can make out those of the woman and child. This creek was used as a loading place for the bricks made on Castlemartin Corse, and was also a noted smuggling cove. A well constructed road leads down, through a beautiful valley, practically to the waters edge.

#### 7. St Mary's Sunken Forest

This consists of a small number of ash trees, the tops of which are level with the surrounding ground. It is connected with underground caves. From here also a strange noise periodically issues, the thunder like noise of the Bosherton Mere. No spray is seen here at such times but a dampness is felt in the air. The ground has sunk about 30 feet. The jungle at the bottom is the haunt of innumerable hares.

#### 8. Tumuli

This was discovered about 30 years ago by Fredrick, Earl Cawdor and Colonel Lamston of Brownslade. The mound measures eight yards from east to west and five yards from north to south. During excavation operations it was found to contain the bones of a warrior in a limestone coffin, parts of which may still be seen.

#### 9. Silurian Encampment

This overlooks the Bosherton Ponds near Style Castles. Although they have been cut through in some parts the four lines of defence are still clearly seen.

Despite much searching, it has been impossible to find here any flint relics.



## 10. St Michael's Church

This is a fine old Norman Church built in the 12 century. From its battled tower may be seen an unrivalled landscape. The building is in the form of a cross; it has a north and south transept. Since its restoration by the Cawdors in 1855 its high backed old oaked pews have disappeared, and its Norman windows replaced by those of Gothic design.

The inside presents many interesting features not the lest of which is the recumbent figure under the north transept window, representing the Dowager Duchess of Buckingham, an antecedent of the Duke of Norfolk. The fact that she was a widow may be gathered from the veil and cloak she wears, and that she was of noble birth by the coronet on her head, and the dog at her feet.

Under the south transept window lies a figure which was found buried in the churchyard, but was carried into the church about 90 years ago. In form it resembles a Crusader, and is commonly believed to have been carved about the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

This is one of the churches where one may still see preserved the Leper's Squirnt, to which the poor outcasts of bygone years could come to receive their Bread and Wine.

Like most of the churches of our country, St Michael's Church, Bosherton has paid tribute to the greatness and gallantry of some of its children in the form of memorials. There is a brass tablet to help to keep forever green the memory of its sons who gave their live for King and Country in the Great War; there is also a memorial window to one who gave his all in the epic Battle of Jutland.

But Peace has also had its heroes and in the north and south transept windows Bosherton has paid tribute to a gallant gentleman - David Edward Williams, Archdeacon of St David's 1900 - 20.

In the churchyard may be seen a rude stone cross, the preaching cross of the days of yore. Despite the elements a face may still be dimly discerned upon it.



### **11. The School**

This was built by Sir John Simon's grandfather; he was one of the masons on the Stackpole Estate, and was assisted in his work by James Evans of Furson, whose descendants still reside in Bosherton and carry on the same honourable occupation. The building has but one room, and that not very big. It makes one wonder where the seventy odd children that once frequented it were packed! The first headmistress was Mrs Holden.

Over the west window may be seen the date of its erection 1857 and the words "Feed my sheep". Up to the present this command has been obeyed.

### **12. Style Farm**

This has earned its queer name because each field is approached by a style, now, not in the best condition. An excellent example may be seen, however, leading from the house into the churchyard. The flail was discarded in this farm as far back as the year 1900. Part of the present farm is composed of the restored ruins of what was once known as Whitehall Farm.

### **13. The Blacksmith's Shop**

Alas, no longer can Bosherton boast of such a favourite meeting place. The last blacksmith died in 1864, and ever since the clang of the anvil has not been heard in Bosherton. Now his dwelling place is used as a cow-shed.

### **14. Glebe Farm**

## **15. Coastguard Houses**

The name still remains but the houses are no longer occupied by Coastguards, not full time ones at any rate. The task of keeping a weather eye upon this rough bit of ocean now devolves upon three or four inhabitants in turn. When they are not doing this work they follow their ordinary occupation of rabbit catching.

In front of the houses a quaint old figurehead adds beauty to the scene. It was picked up in Bullslaughter Bay about 1876, and in its heyday, represented the head and shoulders of a woman.

## **16. The Old Smokeshop**

Now the name is not used, neither is the old thatched cottage to be seen. In its place stands the village Post Office, the home of Frank Rogers, a son of Bosherton who won the Military Medal during the Great War, and gave his life for his country in 1917.

## **17. The First School**

This was kept in an old thatched cottage, which like the old Smokehouse possessed a Flemish chimney. Like most of the schools of its day, Handicraft, Physical Exercises, Sewing and Drawing were none of its favourite subjects. Reading and counting were the two favourite subjects, one taught from a book called "Reading Made Easy", or in the language of the pupils (Raidy – ma – daisy) the other by means of the fingers.

The house has now been rebuilt.

## **18. Mead Lodge**

This is situated one mile from Trevalen. Only the ruins of it can now be seen. Once upon a time, it was probably the home of the Allens' lodge keeper. It leads to the old Gale road which is not used now-a-days.

## **19. Trevalen**

Opinions differ as to the origin of the above name. The common explanation is that it was the home of the Allens, but some contend that the name comes from "Tref-ar-llyn". In view of the fact that the house does overlook a large shallow pond or marsh, this explanation is quite feasible.

Here also an old Flemish chimney may be found.

## **20. Castletank**

Or Tankard's Castle consists of two houses built by one of the Earls of Cawdor for old servants of the Estate. Years ago it was a favourite place for storing the goods which were smuggled up from New Quay.

## **21. Newton**

This is an Anglo Saxon name. The farm is unique in that it is the only freehold one for miles around. Here again one of the outhouses has a fine Flemish Chimney. It is more likely that the house was a Dwelling house in the days gone by. The walls surrounding the farm are decorated by quaint stones which are common on this land, and are called "Booby Loobies"

## **22. Thornston**

Evidently named after Thor, the God of War.

### **23. Buckspool**

“Buck’s spoor hill” originally, or the pool where the deer came to drink. Here again the old farmhouse is now used as an out-house and a spacious new house has been built on the opposite side of the road.

### **24. The Devil’s Stone**

This was once used as a boundary stone, and is to be found on the left hand side of the road leading to Crickmail. When this stone is struck by any hard substance a smell of sulphur is detected.

It is only in recent years that Bosherton people have passed this stone without fear and trembling. An old legend tells us that his Satanic Majesty came nightly to sharpen his knives on this stone.

### **25. Eastland**

There now remains but the ruins of an old farm house. Here the last village shoe maker lived. It is an Anglo Saxon name as it is also the name of its neighbouring farm

### **26. Midland**

This is also in ruins. All these small farms have now been swallowed up by one big place.

### **27. Crickmail**

So called after the Gaelic invasion. The name is derived from the words creek and mail, mail meaning ‘mael’ or bare. We may therefore take it that the meaning of the word is “Bare Headland”; no-one who knows of its whereabouts will deny the “bareness” part of it.

### **28. Sunken Forest**

This is situated about half a mile from Crickmail, and can easily be seen from the road leading over the Downs. It is much larger than St Mary’s Sunken Forest found on Trevallen Downs. Here again the tops of the ash trees are on a level with the surrounding ground.

### **29. Anses’ Downs**

This old farmhouse, now in ruins, has an outside staircase and a Flemish chimney, true relics of the Flemings’ domestic settlement here in the reign of Henry I and Edward I.





### 30. Bosherton Pump

The pump is built over a well situated on the western side of the Bosherton ponds. Here the interesting function of electing the Mayors of Bosherton took place. The last to hold this coveted position was James Davies or "Old king" as he was termed, a malster on the Stackpole Estate for 63 years. He lived to the ripe old age of 93, and kept faithfully to the old world dress, knee breeches, cocked hat, swallow tail coat and cravat to the end of his days. His tombstone is to be seen to the western side of the church tower.



### 31. Sprig's Hay

Or Sprig's enclosure is situated on the south western side of Bosherton Ponds. Here may be seen a series of terraces leading down to the waters edge.

Legend tells us that one day when the labourers were ploughing this field, Our Lord passed by and spoke to them saying that they would reap corn there on a certain date. When they looked up no one was to be seen, but it was related that Christ sought refuge from His enemies at St Govan's Chapel and that he passed this field on his way. The story also tells us that the corn was reaped as he foretold.

### 32. Sandy Lays

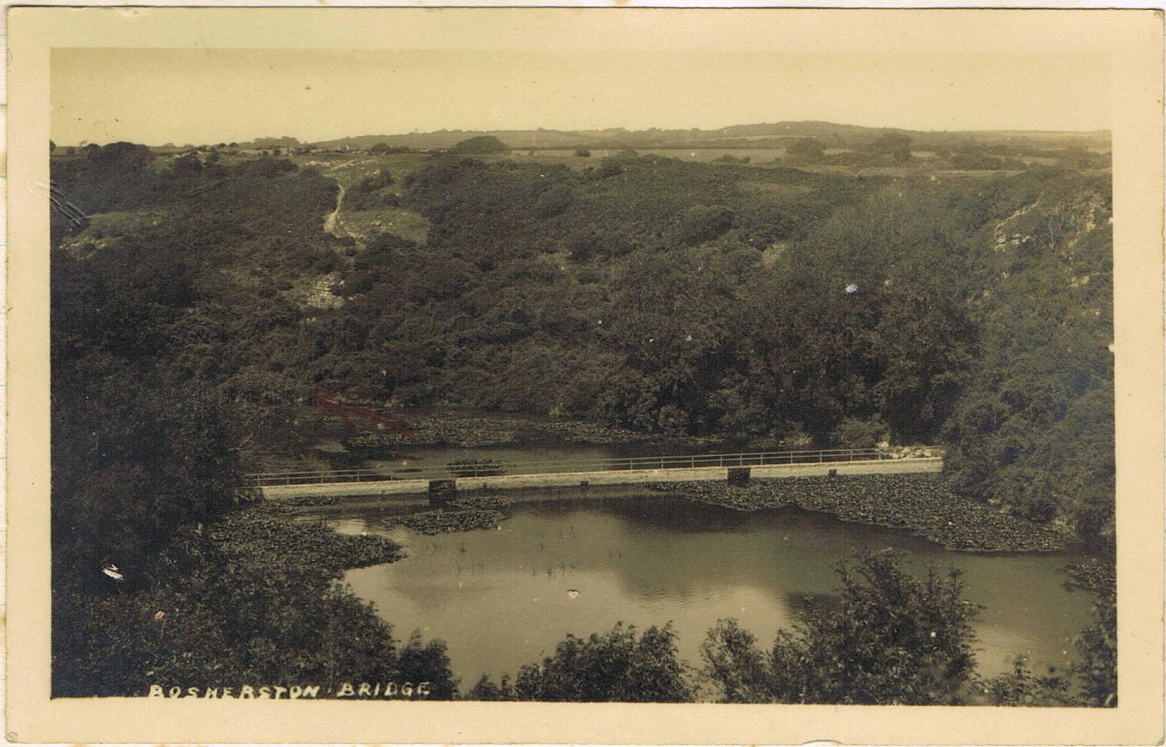
This means "a clearing in the wood". It overlooks Broad Haven on the north west side. Evidently this was once the scene of a battle, many flint arrow heads have been picked up by the school children.



### 33. Whitewell

Here the main spring of the Bosherton ponds is found. In past days the sea came up almost as far as here.

These ponds drain the Castlemartin Hills, which run from Freshwater East to Freshwater West. Lord Cawdor (of Pembrokehire Militia and of Fishguard fame) caused an embankment to be made at the north side of Broad Haven, and therefore helped to form these beautiful ponds, one of the greatest attractions of South Pembrokehire, and, indeed, of South Wales.



White-well - main spring.

# Bosherston in the days of Long Ago

## Its People

Many years ago, Bosherston was more or less a maritime village. That does not mean to say that its inhabitants followed legitimate calling of the sea, but that smuggling was meat and drink to them, many also went to sea to be pirates.

New Quay, as already stated, seems to have been built for smugglers. The last cargo of spirits was run in here in 1833 or 4. It was tied in bags then taken on horseback along by roads to Bentlass Ferry, near Pembroke. From here it was distributed to the county in general.

All smugglers carried firearms and constantly practised their use by shooting at target. They measured the length from the target by barley corn.

## Pastimes

At one time watches were almost unknown and people kept bantam cocks to tell the time. To get up at the third crowing was the custom. But these cocks were put to another uses also. On high days and holidays cock-fighting was very popular. The remains of a cockpit may be seen at the Post Office.

Shooting at targets, besides providing excellent practise, was also a favourite form of recreation.

## Courtship

From all accounts there was much of the cave man quality in this. At the wedding, the best man was always called "the tailor"

These important functions were generally money affairs. No presents were given as a rule, but the plate was passed round among the assembled guests, and each one contributed a little. There was much cake making and ale selling before each wedding. A fiddler did duty both at the church and at the reception.

## Burial

It cannot be said perhaps that the advent of a funeral was welcome by the inhabitants of this charming place, but it certainly is true that a holiday was made of the time. It was the occasion for a big "spree". Even to this day there is much the element of an important function about it. Graves are cleaned and decorated which in ordinary circumstances would not be touched.

This very old churchyard has become so full that the grave digger has on many an occasion dug up bones and has had to transfer his activities elsewhere.

It has been discovered that not only do some of these oldest graves contain human remains but bones of horses as well. From this we may gather that the bold warriors of long ago and their chargers were buried near each other. There is a legend that there is a "Golden Bedstead" buried somewhere near, its resting place remains to be discovered by some favoured individual. This makes us think that the Viking fashion of burying a person's goods and chattels with him found favour here at one time.

## Superstitions and Beliefs

It would take much searching to find a place where deep rooted old beliefs still hold sway than in Bosherston especially, I think, where death is concerned.

Now, as in the days of yore, it is believed that if a knock comes at the door or window of a house containing an invalid it is but the forerunner of death. A dog howling predicts the same thing.

As previously stated, Satan was always on the look out for the unwary travellers in the dark. If it were in any way possible the Devil's Stone was given a wide berth by all and sundry.

But no less did they believe in fairies whom they termed “Good Little People”. The rings which these formed when dancing may still be seen on the downs!! The “pixie rings” are now famous for their annual yield of mushrooms.



## Vocabulary

In addition to the Flemmings; Danes, Saxons, Normans and Irish have also made their homes in this beautiful part of the country or “Little England beyond Wales” as it is termed. The people differ considerably from the Welsh in their everyday mode of living; they also differ from the English. They have a vocabulary which is distinctly their own. They don’t seem to be found in any standard dictionary, and at first present many difficulties to the outsider

“Gripe” means a ditch or a gutter by the road

“Mixer” is a heap of manure.

Low lying land is termed “corse” from the Viking “carse”

“Stivle” means to be very cold.

The wren is called the “cutty”, the magpie the “pyatt”, and the gander the “gant”.

A suet pudding is called a “tolly”.

A cow fond of using its horns is called a “pilking” cow.

The fire at night is “stunned” or closed down with small coal mixed with clay.

“Scadly pluck” is used to denote racing for sweets or other delicacies; while a person who gets more than his due share is termed “scadly”.

“Mitching” is used for playing truant.

“Hecking” to hop on one leg.

“Piling” to throw stones.

A willow basket is called a “cowell” which of course is similar to the Welsh word “cawell”.

A funny name for ones head is “amiddack”; “voor” is a word often heard in ploughing matches and means a furrow.

“Skew” for settle and “preen” for knitting needles are also in daily use.

It affords one real pleasure to hear two old inhabitants of the place conversing. Now with the advent of several Welshmen to the district, the “down belaaw” element is gradually losing ground in the use and pronunciation of words.