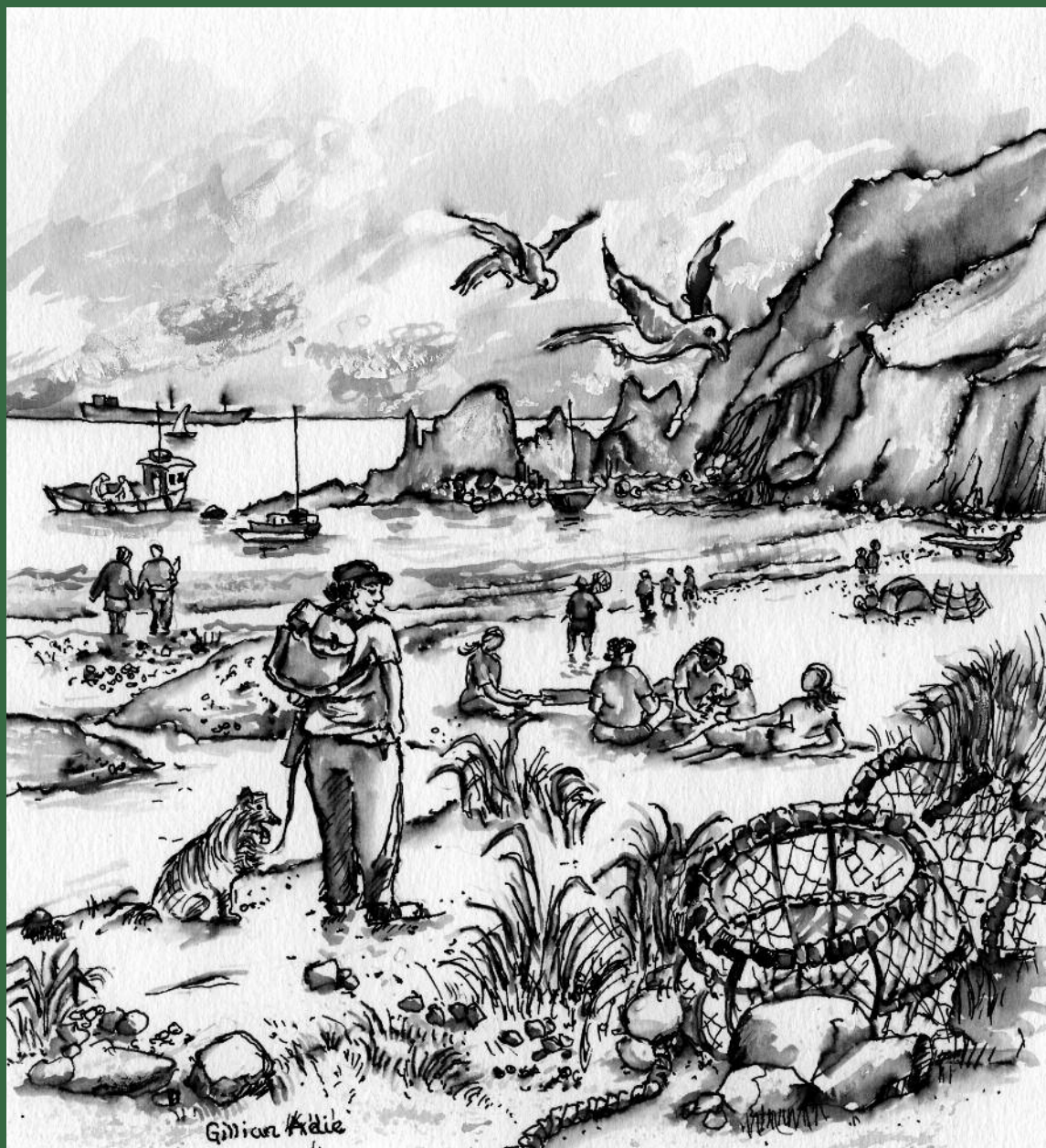


FRESHWATER EAST

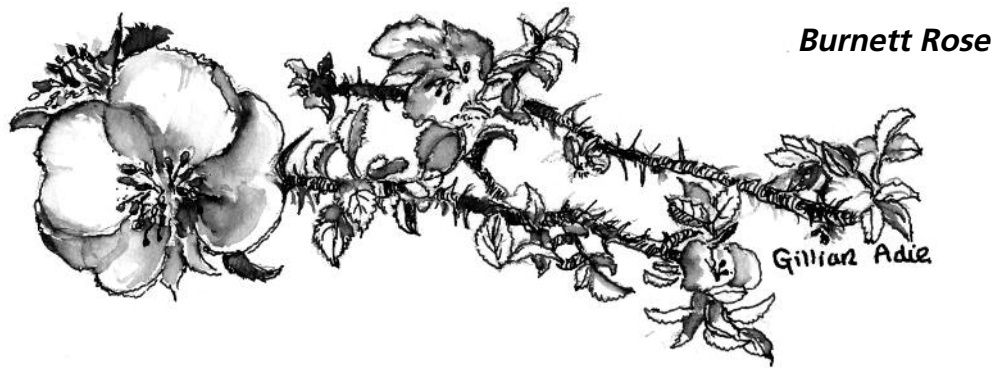


*Naws am Le
Sense of Place*

Freshwater East

Freshwater East Bay is bounded to the north and south by cliffs designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) because of their geological and biological features. It has a safe sandy beach from which sand dunes extend to the coast roads. This area, known as 'the Burrows', has long been special to local people for its informal open space, its tranquil beauty and its wildlife. It was kept cropped by rabbits up to the 1950s until their decline through myxomatosis resulted in the rapid growth of scrub and woodland. Much of the Burrows is now a Local Nature Reserve owned by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. It is

managed jointly with the community. A rich variety of flora and fauna can be found here including the Burnett Rose, Pyramidal Orchid, the Chough and the Glow Worm.



Geology

Relatively soft rocks in the core of a large anticline (arching fold in the rock layers) have been eroded to form Freshwater East Bay. The cliffs on either side of the bay are mainly composed of mudstones, siltstones and sandstones belonging to the lower part of the sequence of rocks known as the 'Old Red Sandstone'. These were formed from sediments deposited from seasonal flood waters flowing over a low lying coastal plain, situated in an area south of the Equator, around 400 million years ago. Fossils of some of the earliest land plants and tracks and burrows of amphibious creatures have been found but are very rare and protected by SSSI legislation. The rocks were moved to their present position by movements of the plates which make up the Earth's crust ('continental drift') and 'collision' of continents was responsible for the folding and faulting (fracturing and displacement) of the rocks. Erosion of the crushed rock on the fault lines has created gullies in the cliffs at the northern side of the bay.

Prehistoric

Several flint working sites have been recorded at Freshwater East Bay. It is likely that these were produced at temporary campsites used by nomadic hunter-gatherers in the Stone Age. Small slivers of flint represent the debris produced when making arrow heads, knives and other tools. These sites are known as 'flint working floors'. Occasionally, the tools themselves are also present having been lost or discarded. The tools would have been used for hunting or fishing. The style of working changed through time, so an approximate age can be determined, and those at Freshwater East are from 10,000-4,000 years ago (Mesolithic-Neolithic period). Other evidence for campsites includes 'shell middens' where seafood such as oysters, were eaten and their discarded shells are found in abundance.

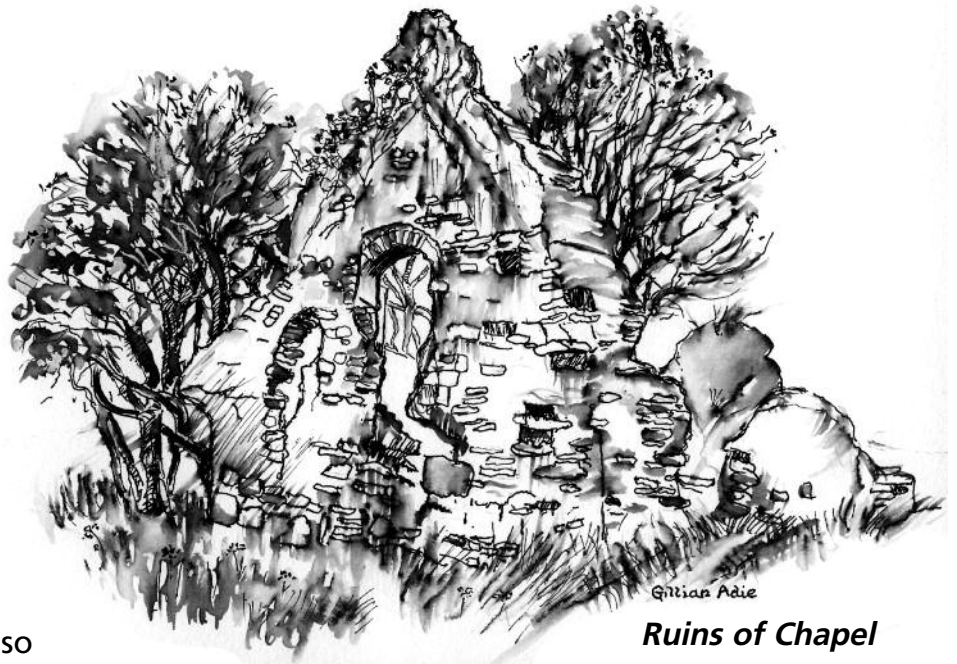
Iron Age (650BC-100AD)

Little is known of the Iron Age Fort at East Cliff. It has never been excavated and part of it has been built over. It is probable however that it is very similar to the Iron Age Fort on Greenala Point just west of Trewent Point. Greenala was built on a headland where the sea provided a natural defence on three sides so only the landward side had to be defended.

It was defended by four massive banks and ditches and was probably topped with a timber palisade. A number of roundhouses and a kitchen midden have been recorded on this site.

Religious Sites

An ancient well lies in an area renowned for its religious significance, near the original settlement of Porthclew. Pre-Christian ceremonies may have been held at the well, as early people attached great significance to places where water emerged from the ground. Water is so important to life that a well such



Ruins of Chapel

as this would have been enshrined. Not far from the well, five stone coffins or 'Cist graves' probably from the early Christian period and another eleven undated burials were uncovered in 2002. It is possible that the later Medieval Chapel of Portclew, which now stands in ruins, formed part of a pilgrim route to St Davids. Little is known of the chapel although it is thought to date from the 15th century during which time it may have been named St Mary's. (Private - Access can be arranged, ask locally)

Medieval Times Onwards

The high ridge and the slope to the sea formed the southern boundary of the farmlands adjoining Lamphey Palace that belonged to the Bishop of St Davids. It is recorded in the Black Book of St Davids (1324) that 17 husbandmen lived in this area. It was known as Porthlliw, from 'Porth' meaning inlet or bay and 'lliw' for the stream which flows into the sea on the beach. After the Reformation, the Lamphey Estate was granted to the Devereux family - the Earls of Essex. They owned it until after the Civil War. In 1683 the manor of Lamphey was sold to the Owens of Orielton. The two great estates of Orielton and Stackpole were divided by the stream at Trewent. The name Freshwater East appears in the records of the Lamphey Court Leet in 1706 and may have been used as early as 1603. In 1822, the Manor of Lamphey was sold to the Mathias family who owned most of it until 1962. The Leach family of Corston owned the eastern part of Freshwater East until 1980 when it was gifted to the public domain.



Sea Trade at Freshwater East

With its wide beach Freshwater East was a place where coastal shipping could call in for its fresh water, en-route perhaps from Ireland and the West Country to the quays of Pembroke and Haverfordwest. The sea was Pembrokeshire's highway. During the 18th and early 19th century cargoes included exports of lime, coal, corn, local wool, livestock, iron ore and imports such as salt, wine and manufactured goods from Bristol.

Smuggling

The coast surrounding Freshwater East achieved notoriety for smuggling during the 18th century. Contraband was stored in hiding places in the cliffs as well as, on one recorded occasion, at Trewent Mill. One famed event tells of Lord Cawdor and five others, including his cousin, Mathew Campbell the Collector of Pembroke, interrupting an illegal run on Freshwater East beach on

15th November 1801. Campbell had rushed to Stackpole Court to inform Cawdor that a lugger had been spotted entering Freshwater East Bay. After calling for any fast customs boat that was in port at Milford Haven to be sent to Freshwater East immediately, Cawdor and others went to the beach. There they found many casks on the shore and more being unloaded.

Accounts vary in detail but it seems that in the struggle to

claim the casks Cawdor was injured and a mob succeeded in rescuing one of the arrested men as well as some of the casks.



Dangerous Waters

There are many shipwreck sites recorded near Freshwater Bay, but only one actually mentions Freshwater East. On 15th March 1866, the 'Eliza' a wooden schooner, carrying coal from Cardiff to Belfast, was stranded, and lost in force eight winds, three miles west of Freshwater East. All of her crew were lost. During WWI a German U boat sank the 2,000 ton US CG Cutter 'Tampa' in the Bristol Channel. Two bodies were washed up on the beach at Freshwater East and buried in Lamphey Churchyard. Freshwater East had its own lifeboat for a brief period in the 1920s. It was effective in carrying out a number of rescues.

Development of the Village

Bordered by the rich cultivated farmlands of Trewent, Lake and Portclew, remnants of medieval times still remain.

Portclew House was tenanted by the Llewelyn family from the mid 16th century until 1841 when it became the property of Thomas Josiah Wedgwood of the Staffordshire pottery family who 'gentrified' the house as a Regency residence. Today, the house and outbuildings have been carefully restored and it is now a Guesthouse.

On the opposite side of the road, overlooking the coast, Upper Portclew house was already a gentry house and was the largest house in the Lamphey parish until the 1820s when Lamphey Court was built. In 1841 a legal dispute between William Parry of Upper Portclew and the Mathias family of Lamphey Court confirmed the Burrows as manorial waste.

Portclew House



Freshwater East was part of a busy social scene in Victorian times.

The 'Pembrokeshire County History Vol. 4.' records that Pembrokeshire Horse Races were held on Freshwater East beach in October 1860 "A goodly number of persons of all grades attending"

The popularity of Freshwater East as a venue for picnics and outings was boosted in 1864 by the advent of the Pembroke-Tenby railway. Visitors came to Lamphey Station and then either walked or were transported to the top of the Burrows by horse drawn wagonettes. In earlier times, a horse drawn coach from Tenby travelled via Jameston and, the now, Jason Road, across the Burrows to the bridge and on to Stackpole and Pembroke.

Census records show that between 1861 and 1901 there were about twenty households in the area. Most were farms and farm cottages with less than five properties located on the Burrows. The total population was approximately 100. In 1861 all the men, apart from a couple of coastguards, worked as farmers or farm labourers.

By 1901 this had changed and at least a third of the men were working as shipwrights or dockyard workers, probably attracted by better wages in the busy dockyard of Pembroke Dock.

From the early 1900s onwards, simple wooden bungalows were built on small plots of land leased from the Lamphay Court Estate. Many of the owners were business people from Pembroke and Pembroke

Dock. 'Wavecrest' has been listed as a typical dwelling of that era. Sale of plots and

building on the Burrows was stopped in the 1930s in order to retain

its natural open character. Between the wars, the Shop and Post Office were

supplemented by mobile shops selling

meat, groceries, vegetables etc.

Electricity and Mains Water arrived in Freshwater East in the 1950s.



Wavecrest

On land donated by Ronald Mathias, a public subscription provided a 'Tennis Field' and Pavilion in 1922. Church services were held here on Sundays in August.

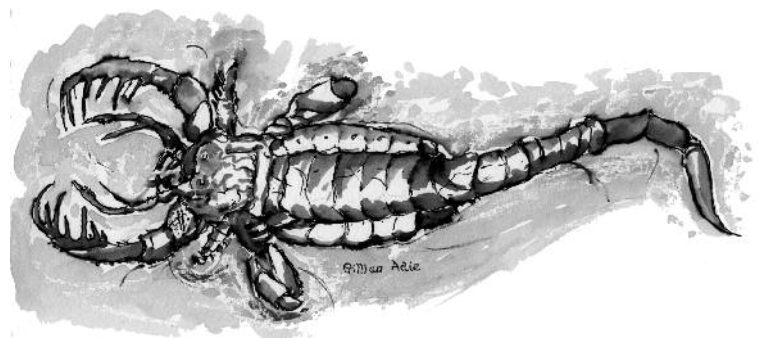
During WWII, the Dunes were mined and barbed wire and iron spikes protected the beach. The Home Guard patrolled the Burrows. Freshwater East became a sanctuary for people bombed out of Pembroke Dock during the great Blitz.

In 1952 the village became part of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.

From 1974-1999 there was a proposal to convert the village into a major resort. This was overturned by the purchase of land by the National Park Authority.

The population increases to over 2000 during the holiday season. However Freshwater East still retains much of its rural, unspoilt character, thanks to the conservation of the natural Burrows and Beach.

Fossilised tracks of the ancient water scorpion have been found in local rocks.



Country Code

Respect • Protect • Enjoy

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

Text researched and written by Freshwater East Heritage Group

Illustrations: Gillian Adie

Design by Waterfront Graphics

PLANED © 2007



Arlennir a hwylusir Gweithredu
dros Gymunedau Gwledig gan
Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru.
Rural Community Action is funded
and facilitated by the Welsh
Assembly Government.

