

# BOSCAWEN-ÛN STONE CIRCLE

SW 4122 2736 [OS Maps Explorer 102; Landranger 203]

## LOCATION

Boscawen-ûn (pronounced *Bosca-noon*) Stone Circle lies to the south of the main A30 road between Penzance and Land's End about a mile before Crows-an-Wra.

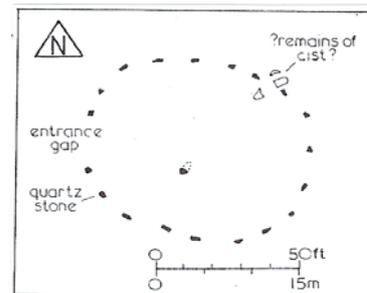


## ACCESS

There are two principal means of getting to the circle. A farm track leads from the A30 to Boscawen-ûn farm, from where a sign-posted track leads to the circle. Please note that there is no parking in the farmyard itself, though there is usually room for a car or two on the grass verge of the farm lane, providing access is not blocked. Alternatively, about half a mile further west along the A30, there is a grass verge on the south side of the road, where two or three cars may be parked. From here a signpost points to the circle along a permissive path.

## DESCRIPTION

The site dates from the late Neolithic-early Bronze Age (approx. 2500-1500 BC) and consists of an ellipse circle of 19 stones, ranging in height from 0.9m (3ft) to 1.4m (4½ft). One of these stones on the NE side is made of almost pure white quartz. In addition, there is an off-centre leaning stone 2.4m (8ft) high. It is not known whether this stone was always leaning at this angle or whether it has slipped over the years. In the NE side of the circle there is a jumble of stones that may have been part of a burial cist. There is a gap between stones on the W side of the circle, similar to the Merry Maidens stone circle but on the opposite side.



[c] Craig Weatherhill

## FOLKLORE & LEGEND

Boscawen-ûn; which is Cornish for 'elder tree on the downs', takes its name from the nearby farm. The circle was recorded as far back as the early medieval period in the Welsh Triads, as one of the three principal gorsedds (Bardic meeting places) of the island of Britain. In 1928, the revived Gorsedd of the Bards of Cornwall was inaugurated at the site.

## PURPOSE AND MEANING

Like the other stone circles in West Penwith, it seems likely that Boscawen-ûn was a place for ceremony and ritual. It is known that quartz was seen as a sacred stone to the megalithic builders (when the central Hurlers circle was excavated on Bodmin Moor a whole layer of quartz foundation stones were found), so the quartz stone in the circle may have had some significance relating to healing and perhaps the moon. The fact that the circle, like others in West Penwith, had 19 stones may also relate to the 18.64 year cycle of the moon, or the 19 year metonic cycle of the moon and sun. Also, the centre stone faces in the direction of the midsummer solstice sunrise, towards an outlying standing stone [see page 2], and the rising sun at midsummer illuminates a carving of two axe-heads that lie towards the base of the stone. Axes were important to the Neolithic and Bronze-Age peoples as ritual objects, and Cornish greenstone axes were traded with other tribes in England and elsewhere, so this carving on the centre stone is probably a sacred symbol. In the other direction, the sun can be viewed setting between the centre and quartz stones at Samhain (Oct 31st), a pre-Christian festival, when viewed from a spot on the opposite side of the circle.

**Go to page 2 for details of other ancient sites in the area.**

**PLEASE TREAT THIS SITE WITH RESPECT & LEAVE NO LITTER OR OFFERINGS.**

**IF YOU FIND ANY DAMAGE OR VANDALISM PLEASE PHONE 01736-787186 OR 787522**

# OTHER SITES NEAR TO BOSCAWEN-ÛN STONE CIRCLE

## STANDING STONES NEARBY CIRCLE

**Field Stone** - SW 4149 2761

**LOCATION & ACCESS** Three fields to the NE of the circle is a standing stone near to a hedge. Built into the hedge is the remains of what may have been a second one of an original pair. There is no public right of way to the stone.

**DESCRIPTION & MEANING** The standing stone is 2.6m (8½ft) high, and was probably originally an outlier to the stone circle. It is on a NE alignment from the circle, marking the midsummer solstice sunrise when seen from the circle.



*Stone in field (left) & in hedge (right)*

**Hedge Stone** - SW 4174 2770

**LOCATION & ACCESS** This stone stands in the hedge of the lane that leads from the A30 road to Boscawen-ûn Farm.

**DESCRIPTION & MEANING** This is a triangular-shaped stone 2.3m (7½ft) high. It may also be connected to the Field Stone, as there is a straight alignment or ley line that goes from the Hedge Stone to the Field Stone and on to the location of a standing stone at Trevear near Sennen, finishing at a standing stone in a hedge at Sennen.

**BLIND FIDDLER STANDING STONE** SW 4252 2818

**LOCATION & ACCESS** Return to the main A30 road and head back eastwards towards Penzance. After a few miles, just before Catchall, there is a good-size layby on the right (south) side of the road. Park here, and the Blind Fiddler standing stone is in the field on the opposite (left, north) side of the road.

**DESCRIPTION & MEANING** This is a good specimen of a standing stone, being some 3.3m (11ft) in height and studded with quartz. Its name comes from the legend of the stone being a musician who was turned to stone for playing on the Sabbath, the same legend as pertains to the Pipers standing stones near to the Merry Maidens circle.



**TRELEW STANDING STONE** SW 4217 2693

**LOCATION & ACCESS** This stone is located to the south of Boscawen-ûn circle, and is best reached by continuing along the A30 eastwards towards Penzance, and at Catchall turning south-west towards St. Buryan. After about a mile, there is a turning on the left to Trelew farm. The stone is in a field to the left (south) of this lane. The photograph (left) shows St. Buryan church tower in the distance.

**DESCRIPTION & MEANING** This is another fine standing stone, 3m (10ft) tall, which was excavated by W. Borlase in 1872 who found a pit some 1m (3ft) away, containing pieces of wood, flint, clay and bone. This stone has several interesting alignments or ley lines going through it, including one from Boscawen-ûn circle which runs through a fallen stone at SW 4182 2702 to this



standing stone and on to two more standing stones at Toldavas & Castallack.

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