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TERRESTRIAL ZODIACS
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HINTS OF A TERRESTRIAL ZODIAC IN NORTH-WEST HERTFORDSHIRE

by PETER M. HUGHES

I. UNDERLYING GEOMETRY.

Evidence for a terrestrial zodiac is to be found around Harpenden and to a less distinct degree around St Albans, though both must be included in the overall pattern. There are initial hints in place-names like Ramridge, Bulls Wood, Bowmans-green, which would seem to link with the constellations Aries, Taurus and Sagittarius and so provide a starting point, at the same time giving a clue to the size of the feature.

Attempts to define a base circle which might hold the whole thing together have led to frustration and disappointment as first one seemed to work, up to a point but not quite, and then another, more promising so it seemed, only to be rejected, and then another, and so on. None of them was quite convincing enough.

More recently a vessica piscis type of figure type of figure has been tried and here the results for a particular one have been, I believe, successful. The two intersecting circles have the same diameter of very close to 7.00 miles and their centres are 3.75 miles apart. A true vessica would, of course, require this to be 3.50 miles. Nevertheless some very interesting geometry ensues.

The line joining the centres of the two circles, which we may call the axis, has a grid bearing of N15⁰W, so we may conveniently refer to the north circle and the south circle. The north one passes through three pre-Reformation churches, or at least the symbols for them on O.S. maps, St Leonard's, Hampstead; St Leonard's, Sandridge; and Ss Peter & Paul, Kimpton. The other mops up, as it were, the remaining pre-Reformation churches within the first, St Helen's, Wheathampstead; St Nicholas', Harpenden; at St Mary's, Redbourn.

The only other churches of such age within reach are St Alban's Abbey Cathedral, sited where Alban was beheaded by the Romans, typically at the highest point overlooking the town, in this case Verulamium; and the three churches built by the Abbot Ulsinus in the 10th century, one on each of the three approaches to the settlement which had grown up around the abbey, now the City of St Albans. These four, then, were probably not sited geomantically.

Regarding the positioning of the others, it was customary in Hertfordshire to build a church just to the south of a pagan shrine so that it kept the "sun off the Devil!" North doors were often known as Devil's doors.

Sandridge and Kimpton Churches are separated by exactly a quarter of a circle. In a straight line they are just five miles apart, all but 100 yards or so. Wheathampstead and Redbourn Churches subtend an angle 3 degrees bigger than a quarter circle at the centre of theirs but Harpenden Church is exactly halfway between them on the circumference. The straight line distance from here to either is 2.72 miles. It has been suggested elsewhere, by more than one researcher, that a measure of 1760 megalithic yards of 2.72 feet should be treated as a unit, perhaps called a megalithic mile. A distance of 2.72 modern statute miles would then be exactly three megalithic miles, or one league (c.f. 'lea' and 'ley'). Two units, or 5.44 miles is, I believe, a commonly found spacing of significant points on ley alignments.

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The straight-line distance between Redbourn and Wheathampstead Churches is exactly 5 miles. From Redbourn Church to Sandridge Church is exactly 4.5 miles. From Redbourn Church to Hampstead Church is exactly half of this, 2.25 miles.

There is another pair of very nearly equal distances: From Harpenden Church to Sandridge Church is 3.38 miles and from Harpenden Church to Hampstead Church is very nearly the same, 3.36 miles. Harpenden Church could be seen to be a key point.

The line joining Kimpton and Sandridge Churches crosses the line through Harpenden and Wheathampstead Churches at right angles. The line joining Kimpton and Wheathampstead Churches crosses the line through Hampstead and Harpenden Churches at right angles. The line from Redbourn Church to Sandridge Church is at right angles to the line from Sandridge Church to Wheathampstead Church.

Between them the six churches form an arrangement which includes three near-alignments of three churches each. It is physically impossible to get more than four. The purist ley hunter would probably dismiss them through their not being eyeball straight, but to the statistician this is not necessarily a prerequisite. He simply widens the tolerance in his calculations. The worst case is Kimpton Church lying 0.3 miles off the line through the churches at Sandridge and Wheathampstead. Even with a tolerance as wide as this, I calculate by Mr Forrest's method that there is still a greater than 120 to 1 chance in favour of deliberate placement.

There are several imponderables: how do the church symbols lie in relation to the pre-existing pagan sites which one can only assume were there anyway? Is it likely that any displacement is uniformly matched at all other sites? Is it necessary to assume that the ancients, whoever they were, were insistent that their shrines, or whatever they were, had to be dead on lines of sight? In other words, if an approximate alignment is found, does it mean that no deliberate or conscious effort was made to site the points on it in relation to the others? Did they never make mistakes or bend the rules in favour of convenience?

I believe that a large number of near-alignments is just as strong evidence for planned siting, albeit achieved with something less than 100% accuracy, as the more spectacular but far less numerous examples of alignments correct to within the resolution capabilities of the human eye. And despite Watkins, we have to admit that the latter are very, very few and far between. My plea is that the less accurate are not rejected out-of-hand.

One other geometrical oddity is that five of the six churches lie on, or very nearly on, one or other of 28 equally spaced radials to the north circle. The angle between two adjacent such 'spokes' is 12.857 degrees. Quite early in my searches for ley type alignments in my home district, well before I had any inkling there may be a zodiac here, I discovered that the most promising lines nearly always made an angle of something very close to a multiple of a shade under 13 degrees where they crossed. Perhaps the 12.857 degrees angle applies widely?

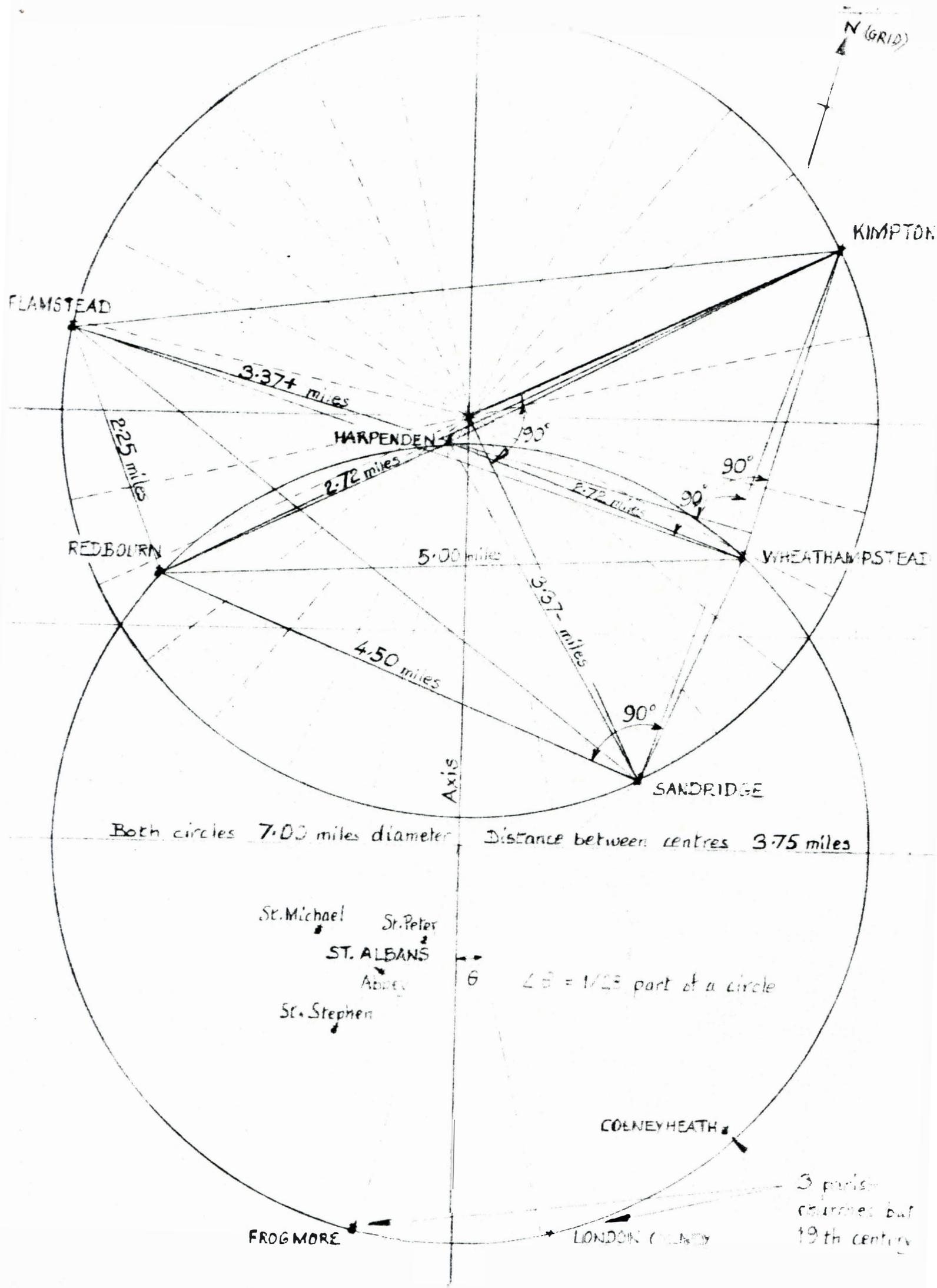
The 28 sectors into which the north circle is divided puts one in mind of the '28 mansions of the moon'? In this case it is to be noted that the axis joining the centres of the two circles lies along one of the spokes and its opposite. Another point on which to ponder is that 28 is half the number of Aubrey holes at Stonehenge.

This concludes for the time being a consideration of the disposition of pre-Reformation churches in relation to a N?W Hertfordshire zodiac. The next part will deal with certain non-church features of the underlying geometry and explain how the orientation was discovered through a particular connection with one of the oldest pagan deities of all, the Earth Mother goddess.

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VIRGO, ROBIN HOOD, AND VIRGO AGAINby JOHN BILLINGSLEY

In the Hebden Bridge Zodiac, Virgo is not just another Corn Goddess, comely and offering a sheaf to the world as often found in terrestrial zodiacs. She is a hunch backed old hag, a foil to the beautiful damsel, that further illustrates her nature as a symbol of the Triple Goddess, who may be all guises of women and more besides. She can also be a crow, and half a mile to her back stands the Crow, sentinel of the zodiac and of the valley, and aptly visualised by Ted Hughes as a local motif.

Her form is immediately recognisable as that of a picture-book witch, and near her feet is Bog Eggs; if the children of the area misbehaved, they were told that the witches of Bog Eggs would come and suck their blood, a tale that recalls Black Annis who had a similar taste for little ones. She is still remembered in a hill as nearby a Rochdale. The impression of Virgo as a witch is further compounded by the status of the animal whose head she cradles in her hands -- the Leo of the zodiac, but definitely a cat, not a lion. This is Virgo's animal, and the witch's familiar; between them they conjure up not only a picture of Wiccan domestic bliss, but also the image of "Fortitude" in the Major Arcana of the Tarot. It may be seen as a reconciliation of the inner and outer planes of existence, the triumph of the higher planes over the base urges.

As a witch, Virgo cannot cross running water; so instead she dons another of her forms, becomes Earth Mother and giver of sustenance. Where her hands meet at Leo's head, she gives a gift which flows through the cat to Hebden Bridge and ever on. She gives the gift of water and wisdom; water, because it is a stream, and wisdom, for this brook is Nut Clough. For a rippling moment she is Churn Milk Peg, lady of the greenwood, protector of nuts, and kin to Churn Milk Joan, who now is a standing stone on the beak of the Crow, recalled also in Joan Wood, near Virgo's hands. We may wonder what nut she may be particularly associated with here, but if Collon Flat, at her feet, is any clue, we may recognise the Celtic element "coll", meaning hazel, which shares part of the calendar with Virgo.

This ubiquitous lady atop the moors leaves an image which may wax powerful, giving the witches of Bog Eggs, and this passage from the Midgley Pace-Egg Play, spoken by Toss-pot: "I've lost my wife/ and i cannot find her/ if any of you see her/ you must turn her back/ she has two broken legs/ and a hump on her back". Her is Toss-pot's wife walking away from Midgley across the moors, perhaps to visit friends in Bog Eggs or Pendle; they will know her for more than a wife, they will know her in the many forms that she, as the Triple Goddess, deigns to take.

Equally ubiquitous in the Calder Valley is Robin Hood. He has been identified elsewhere with Sagittarius, the archer and Noble Warrior, and there can be no argument with that identification as far as Mytholmroyd's hidden warrior goes; behind his form lies a liberal scattering of tales pertaining to Robin Hood as a giant, playing games with standing stones and sitting atop Robin Hood Rocks above Sagittarius' head. Robin made himself very much at home in this area -- he stayed at various local homesteads, and sheltered in his bed at Blackstone Edge. When his time came, he went to meet his death at Kirkstiles Priory, a few miles down the Calder; and death was met at the hands of a prioress as enigmatic as a woman as Robin is as a man. Robin's character is hazy -- nothing of clarity has been added to it by those who seek to prove he was a historical person, nor by the hacks of the Victorian solar-myth obsession, nor yet by later romancers who carry us further away from our only source material, folklore, and early ballads. At his simplest, Robin is the Green Man. His role in folklore is essentially pagan, and the ways in which he is remembered are survivals of pagan awareness. He shares his abode with the beasts of the field and wood, living in a figured balance with his world, and it is in this way that we find him in the archers of the landscape; shadows of all Noble Warriors who stride through history.

Perhaps the most explicit and consistent of all the Robin Hood legends is that of his death, and we can look at it in a way that indicates it is pure ritual sacrifice.

More than this, it reveals the esoteric side of the Prioress who is the agent of his death. This lady happens to be, according to Eileen Power, the only nun mentioned in any early English or Scottish folk-song, and as such we may assume that she is no ordinary nun, or presumably, like them, she would not feature in such a format. The final scenes of the outlaw's life give an inkling of the relationship between these two characters, possibly the most clear-cut of all those in the Robin Hood myths.

Throughout his life, we are told, Robin's first devotion has been to the "deere lady that art both mother and may", the Virgin Mary/Goddess. It is no surprise then that when his vigour is at a low ebb and his blood flows sluggishly, he betakes himself to a sacred place run by the contemporary priestesses, there to be bled. He goes apparently fully aware of the fact that it will incur his death, and certainly women on his route forewarn him of this. The Princess tends to his debility, but deliberately draws too much blood, fatally weakening Robin. At this point some variants introduce "Red Roger", the Prioress' paramour, who rushes into the sickroom at a most curious and in opportune time, bent on murder, but generally getting despatched by the failing outlaw. Robin's last act is of geomantic interest, recalling the siting of Salisbury Cathedral; from his chamber he shoots an arrow to decide the place of his grave and it falls beside the track. His final words are to forbid his men to take reprisals against the Prioress (or any woman), thus reaffirming at the last his allegiance to the womanly spirit who has been the love of his life, and, by proxy, the cause of his death. Neither is she punished by any lady, and some ballads allege that she was interred with him; others, more explicitly, declare that Robin and the Prioress are related, and in a subtle fashion, at least, they are.

We may question why Robin chose a Christian house to be doctored in, after continually harrassing the high officials of that Church, but Eileen Power notes that in the 14th Century, 19 out of 27 Yorkshire nunneries came before the Archbishop of York accused of immorality and apostasy, and we may infer that Kirklees Priory -- which is named in the ballads -- may not necessarily have been a wholly Christian establishment. The ballads portray the Prioress in various guises, to extend this inference. As a nun, she is a maid; as a prioress, she is a mother; and is she really different from the hags that line Robin's last sacrificial path? She is a lover, "Red Roger" sees to that; she is a healer, whose reputation draws Robin; and she is a death-dealer, yet knowing this Robin still doesn't flinch from the outcome. The Prioress is clearly once more the Triple Goddess, the lady of many forms; and she adds another element to the understanding of Robin and his stories as pagan allegories -- perhaps concocted at a date when Britain was already nominally Christian, but as we already know with a flourishing underground of pre-Christian belief. Robin the outlaw, the man separate from men, is as elusive in death as he would have been in life. When his grave was excavated nothing was found -- once more a revered and spiritual person leaves us with an empty tomb.

Through the Noble Warrior connection, Robin Hood becomes Sagittarius; through the manifestations of the Triple Goddess, the fateful Prioress becomes Virgo. They are here shown as members of the terrestrial/British zodiac family, which includes beasts, birds, and humans; the family of the earth, as perceived by nature mystics, and others who live close to the realm of the greenwood.

THE GAIAT AND THE DORSET CURSUS

by MOLLIE CAREY

I suppose that the Dorset Cursus must be one of the most puzzling earthworks of prehistoric times. Over six miles long and winding up and down and round the countryside in a very uneven line, whatever could it have been? Of course, the archaeologists have the ready answer -- a ritual track! The mind (even my thick one) boggles. Just think of it, those people arose in the morning, set out along the track, came back and went to bed. Well, it's a long way to walk. Or they played games along it and stuffed long barrows across the track for good measure! Or -- could the answer be something out of our vision, because we cannot view it with the builders' eyes?

Some years ago I visited John Bennett, and a wet drizzling afternoon it was as well. But we walked along some of it and the impression I had was that it was part of something bigger. As I walked along this impression kept coming through. I told John, but we were puzzled. Bigger! Impossible! I dismissed it as my imagination and we went on to see Knowlton circles. There is a church in ruins built in one of these henge monuments and we found the visit quite rewarding in spite of the weather.

But after finding some of the figures by following the St Aldhelm clue, I wondered if anything "took in" the Dorset Cursus, and this is what I found.

A lot of this figure has vanished and could it be as a result of a lot of the land being enclosed as a royal forest? I traced what I could find and found it could indeed be part of a figure.

It is amazing how the remnants of Grims Ditches fall into shape as a cloak and if the earthworks at Whitbury mark the hand, then we can picture a figure striding along with his cloak falling behind him. It is strange how the ditches and earthworks "conform" to this figure. It might be that what I think could be the right foot is wrong and the figure could be seated on a beast's back or something. However, I think there is enough evidence here for another explanation of the purpose of the Dorset Cursus, and it is more in line with the other earthworks around. South of Whitbury is Sandleheath and the church here is dedicated, I believe, to St Aldhelm. Just off the figure is Tarrant Hinton and Hinton Martell. Hinton means "High Place" and I believe the High has a double meaning. Hinton's pop up around the figures. There are Ash names and Thorn names. I believe the head of this figure would be in the Ringwood area. When the figures were first set out they may have been marked out by roads with ditches and banks, or just banks. There are many stretches of Grims Ditches snaking across the countryside and perhaps we now have a clue as to their purpose, with a slight chance of finding out more. There is a lot of folklore. I wonder if the Salisbury giant which went in procession with the Hobnors or Hobbyhorse had anything to do with this giant? He is now in Salisbury Museum and there is a booklet there about him.

North of Whitbury is the Gaint's Grave long barrow and north-west of Downton is the Gaint's Grave long barrow and nearby the Giant's Chair tumulus. At Damerham there is a hill with a dragon legend.

If one accepts this figure then it is probable that the Stonehenge Cursus and all the others would be parts of figures, and the Stonehenge avenue perhaps had a like purpose in its bending route to the river?

Oh yes, it's all very mad, or is it?

But don't be put off because some of the archaeologists say some of the ditches are Saxon. They may have been redigging them. Anyway St Aldhelm was around in Saxon times and he seemed to know more than us about all this.

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***** Addition to last issue's piece by *****
* Clive Harper: Mr Hudson's letter includes a reference to
* an earlier portfolio in which the Glastonbury Zodiac was
* discussed. I have not been able to identify which port-
* folio in question is one of the four volumes now missing.
* Alternatively it is by no means impossible that I missed
* the earlier discussion, as my examination was regretably
* hurried. *****

LETTERS:

From Elizabeth Gaudry: "I was brought up in a small village near East Grinstead, called Turners Hill, which contained four pubs: The Lion, Unicorn, Crown, and Punch Bowl (Celtic cauldron of Wisdom?). I wonder if these refer to the figures of a zodiac, or other sky picture, or is the choice of names purely coincidental?"

There is an old rhyme: "The Lion and the Unicorn were fighting for the Crown.
Along came the Punch Bowl and knocked them all down."

The "knocking down" seems to follow from the "Punch" and makes no sense with a Punch Bowl! In any case this must be a local variant as the version given in the Opies' Nursery Rhymes is: "The lion beat the Unicorn
All round about the town."

From Peter Hughes: "Curiously enough, the day I received No. 8 I was lent a book by somebody with no knowledge of its arrival, or even existence, pertaining to the subject of your front page article. You may wish to add it to your cumulative bibliography. It is "Window to the Past -- Exploring History through Extra Sensory Perception", by Hans Holzer (Leslie Frewin, London, 1970). Though the incidents covered do not go as far back as TZ times, the book is nevertheless most interesting and could possibly help with an understanding of the techniques."

Now that we have a statistician in our midst, in the person of Bob Forrest, it presents us with a challenge. Let's hope we can rise to it! Those who have read his "Ulro Bugle" will know he has a wicked sense of humour. He is the sort of sceptic one doesn't mind having around, at least when the humour is directed against somebody else's zodiac or what have you, which you don't think much of anyway! Not that Bob is a true sceptic anyway; only towards attempts to "prove ley statistics" which show some lack of self discipline. In fact I believe that when orthodox archaeology comes to accept leys as definite entities it will be due in no small measure to Bob's efforts in taking the trouble to provide irrefutable evidence. Get him on your side and he will bend over backwards to give your findings all the statistical support he can. If they turn out failures, it is through no want of trying on his part.

As a result of private correspondence with Bob, I have altered my approach to zodiacs in certain ways. I have always believed that you cannot separate the twin geomantic characteristics of leys and zodiacs, so I think that all zodiacs should have an underlying ley pattern of some sort.

Also, following S.G. Wildman's analysis of features around Worcester, I believe there ought to be calendrical elements present, related to the annual cycle of festivals. This is where I have now imposed certain restrictions on what I accept. I no longer accept church dedications as relating to their positions in the cycle. Nor do I take any notice now of "modern" features like streets, schools and hospitals named after saints. Considering alignments, linear and circular, I ignore any church site that is not known to have existed in pre-Reformation days. Encouragingly, this cutting down tends to make things easier, first of all to establish the underlying ley pattern, then, because of the reduction of background "noise" to marshal your forces in the battle of the statistics. As a result, I have come a little closer, I believe, to identifying a zodiac in N.W. Herts (see article). Regarding effigies, I refuse to accept anything for which I can find no near enough identical copy elsewhere. This immediately overcomes Bob Forrest's "crumpled paper" objection. By elsewhere, I mean in some other terrestrial zodiac, a star atlas of sufficient age, a treatise on astrology or in heraldry. As an example of the last named you kindly published in TZN 6 my version of the Glastonbury Leo.
