

# Touchstone

Surrey  
Earth  
Mysteries



No. 8

January 1986

## THE NEW STRAIGHT TRACK IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE \*\*\*\*\*

Some time ago Michael de Styrcea mentioned at one of our monthly meetings that the main street of the new town of Milton Keynes is aligned purposely to the midsummer sunrise. I therefore made a point of visiting this when attending a graduates' conference at the nearby Open University campus at Walton Hall.

The street, called Midsummer Boulevard, is Milton Keynes' main shopping street and extends from the main door of the railway station for about a mile of tree-lined dual carriageway, finally ending at a mound called the Belvedere (a name meaning prospect tower).

Midsummer Boulevard itself ends at a T-junction, but the path continues over a bridge and across a park to the Belvedere viewpoint. It is this end of the street which is the most interesting. The mound itself has a circular path round the top linking it to the straight path, and travelling down this towards Milton Keynes we come first to a round pond and then to a round hedge cut to show the points of the compass.

To a ley hunter, the parallel between the mounds, ponds, tracks and clumps of the Old Straight Track are striking, so I looked on the map to see if there is a coincident ley. There seemed to be very little except a few road and track junctions, one named as Wood End and being a fairly striking joining of three tracks with a house adjoining, which could be worth visiting.

The roads running parallel with Midsummer Boulevard are called Silbury Boulevard and Avebury Boulevard, making the ancient



'CAMPBELL  
PARK'  
(AFTER  
LORD  
CAMPBELL  
OF ESKAN)

Midsummer Boulevard itself ends at a T-junction,  
but the path continues over a bridge  
and across a park to the Belvedere

association obvious. Silbury Boulevard, however, is not quite parallel and its extension meets the other line at Wood End. It also goes through North Crawley church in the other direction. A better ley through North Crawley goes through the nearly-parallel A509 for about a mile, as well as Willen church, a cross-roads, a spotmarked height and a milestone.

An even better ley goes through the Open University campus, which has an oak clump at its centre and an old church, St. Michael's, on its perimeter. The campus consists of modern buildings in the grounds of an old house, Walton Hall (which still remains). Many attractive features of the grounds have not been altered, including the clump (The Copse), a mulberry lawn and a walled garden. Several huge old cedars remain too, and a pond just opposite the church.

The line joining clump and church is quite a good ley, coming south through Castle Farm, Lavendon (earthworks evident on map), Lavendon church, cross-roads/tracks and sharp bend near Clifton Reynes, the M1 motorway intersection (earlier crossroads or subconscious siting?), Walton Hall clump, Walton Hall forecourt, St. Michael's church and a church half a mile to the south.

I am trying to find out more about the origin of the design of Milton Keynes.

NEXT MEETING, FEBRUARY 13TH

Jimmy Goddard.

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THE OLD STONES OF THE SURREY/HANTS BORDERS

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by Chris Hall

3. Farnborough.

The old parish church (SU87275556) stands on top of the "Ferneberga", or "fern-covered hill", which gave the settlement its name. The church stands in a small, circular churchyard, the limits of which are exactly those of the tumulus which forms the whole. A wooden Saxon church is believed to have stood here in the 7th century and Roman pottery has been found close by (7). The claim of the site as a ley marker is therefore in little doubt, being a natural hilltop, tumulus and ancient Christian site.

Its inclusion in an article about ancient stones is, on the face of it, a little dubious, but a dowser I once knew claimed there is a buried stone circle on the circumference of the churchyard. This would remain yet another unproved dowser's theory were it not for one fact: just outside the churchyard gate are two stone blocks lying prostrate, one on top of the other. Both are about 16-17" in width, while the upper stone would be about 55" high if upright. The lower block is shorter. They have no notable markings, but would look quite in order as part of any typical moorland stone circle in Britain. Personally, I doubt that a stone circle ever stood in Farnborough, but perhaps a dowser in the group might like to investigate the site? A

standing stone or two in a sacred place seems far more likely. The problem is that no-one knows how long the stones have lain outside the church, or what purpose they served. As is normal in such cases, local lore has come up with a number of explanations:

1) They were mounting stones for people who rode to church.  
 2) They were used to rest the coffin before it was carried into the churchyard.  
 3) They once formed part of a flight of steps.  
 4) Local historians suggest they were glacial deposits.  
 5) They were a sacrificial altar for the tumulus (Anglo-Saxon). This theory seems connected with the finding of stones near Cockadobby Hill (SU86835344), a Bronze Age tumulus(8).

An annual fair was formerly held in Farnborough during the first week of August. It began in the morning with a great procession around the village led by Robin Hood, Friar Tuck and Little John, all dressed in Lincoln green. They first climbed the hill to the parish church where a service was held, then paraded around the village. In the afternoon sports and a fair were held (9). It seems that here some far earlier ritual is being symbolically enacted, with three village leaders dressed in green leading the tribe up the local sacred hill to worship a deity. Perhaps the two mystery stones played a part in this. The symbolic green became the real thing in the old Farnborough May Day festivities. The maypole was set up on the green and a tree nearby was decorated and the children danced around it, one being chosen as Queen of the May.

Another important character was Jack-in-the-Green, who was actually the village sweep in a framework of green boughs (10). The ceremony seems to have ceased somewhere before 1850 (11). A large bonfire was held on the green on November 5th. That it had little to do with Guy Fawkes and a lot to do with an earlier pagan ritual is suggested by the burning of an effigy of a well-known village personality. Elderly people living in 1920 could recall seeing this (12).

Somewhere among all this may lie the clue to the mystery of the stones. The original Farnborough village was at Farnborough Green, with a few more houses at Farnborough Street and another village 1-1/2 miles to the west called Cove. The modern sprawling town of 50,000 people did not begin to grow until the army moved to Aldershot in 1856. Perhaps 3,000 years before, a people who had no written word lit sacrificial fires and spoke in a language of stone cast in a living landscape, stone which rests there still, in a language we have forgotten how to read. Other fragments of their story rest in scattered corners of Surrey, or shaped in hills half as old as time.

References: 7) Official church guide. 8) Jottings from a Farnborough Notebook, Jessie Challacombe (Gale and Folden, 1922). 9) *ibid*; p.66. 10) *ibid*; p.68. 11) *The Morris in Hampshire* - George Frampton; "Hampshire" May 1980. 12) Challacombe, *op. cit*; p.70.

THE ST. MICHAEL'S MOUNT LEY  
by Richard Pywell.

## INTRODUCTION

There is a widely held idea that a line from St. Michael's Mount through Glastonbury Tor and Bury St Edmonds Cathedral is an ancient Ley Line passing through many centres of 'activity'. These are usually associated with burial mounds, tumuli, standing stones, bridges and crossroads.

A good many of these are listed in the List of Ancient Monuments in England, an HMSO publication. This formed the basis of a computer search for such evidence as may confirm the line.

Unfortunately, the list does not include churches, however long established, that are still in use. These are often found on or near ley lines.

## INITIAL SEARCH

A short computer programme was written to find the characteristics of the line through these three sites, and this was found to be a slight curve bowed outwards to the North. It was very close to a straight line, the error over this 310-mile length being less than a mile.

The line passes through parts of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. Ancient sites in all these Counties were checked and those within a kilometre of the computed line were listed. So if there had been a concentration of sites off the line to one side, showing that there was the 'true' line, we should have found it, provided it was not more than a kilometre from the assumed line.

No such bias was found, but the most important and interesting finding was that the computed line picked some 40 sites in Wiltshire, which in any case had by far the most prolific concentration of sites, particularly in the Avebury area. Another important finding was that none were found East of Wiltshire, except for three in Buckinghamshire. This made me wonder whether it should be some other site than Bury Cathedral in Suffolk that should identify the line.

## THE GREAT CIRCLE LINE

A great circle is any line round the Earth's surface that, if continued right round the Earth and back to the start, cuts the Earth exactly into two equal halves. It is the line which theoretically would be produced by a surveyor using sighting rods to continue a straight line across country. The Ordnance Survey maps are drawn on a Grid System, and a great circle line on these maps is not necessarily straight.

Another computer programme was written to test whether three sites lay on a great circle line, and it was found that St Michael's Mount, Glastonbury Tor and Bury Cathedral were on such a line to within a kilometre or so. It was therefore very puzzling that there should be so few sites East of Wiltshire. But what about the intriguing proliferation in and around Avebury?

## THE WILTSHIRE PICTURE

To study the concentration in Wiltshire in greater depth, all the ancient sites listed in that county were fed into the computer, which then

searched for coincidences of sites along straight lines. It found many. When the search area was limited to 150m either side of a line (the minimum theoretically justifiable in view of the fact that the HMSO list gave map references only accurate to the nearest tenth of a kilometre), some 45 lines were discovered, each with at least 20 sites on them. This was shown to be highly significant - that is, it was not a result that could reasonably be expected by chance.

But the astounding thing about it is that ALL the lines passed through, or very close to, the Avebury Ring of standing and fallen stones. Not only that, but they all pointed in a roughly ENE direction, and the mean direction was extremely close to that of the Great Ley.

What of the relationship between the two? It transpired that the line originally established passed within less than 700m of the centre of the Avebury Ring.

#### BURY OR AVEBURY?

With these important facts before us, let us see what the effect is of redrawing the Great Ley through St Michael's Mount, Glastonbury Tor and Avebury Ring. This is found to pass some 3km South of Bury Cathedral, and so is not as good a great circle as the original. It picks up no extra sites East of Wiltshire, so the Eastern section of the line remains a mystery, as far as the HMSO list can tell us.

On the evidence available from this list, there seems to be strong support for the existence of the Great Ley, but none that confirms its existence East of Wiltshire. As for the great circle aspect, how serious is it that there is a 600metre discrepancy at Avebury Ring? If the Ancients used sighting staves to establish the ley, can we blame them for being that much out in 183 miles?

#### LINE THROUGH ST MICHAEL'S MOUNT GLASTONBURY TOR BURY CATHEDRAL

This list includes all stones, mounds, bridges within 500m of the above line (which is a slight curve in the grid reference system, convex to the North), that are listed in the HMSO List of Ancient Monuments in England.

CORNWALL				SOMERSET			
Type	Location	MR	No. of metres N or S of line	RE	Location	MR	Distance
RE	Carwynnen	649374	300N	RE	Doultong	641459	400N
QUOIT	Grant's	776435	100N	Abbey	Lyng	346293	300S
HF	St Steven's Beac	962543	On line	Mump	Othery	360305	200N
DYKE	Tinner's	227686	100S	Bridge	Rode	802543	100N
LS	St Cleer	255705	200N	WILTSHIRE			
stone	King Doniert's	236688	400S	RE	Aldbourne	235779	400N
Cross	Redgate	228686	200S	RE2	Aldbourne	244782	200N
Bridge	St Cleer	206675	100S	RE	Avebury	126713	400S
DEVON				RE	:	123711	400S
Castle	Cadbury	913053	900S	RE	:	123712	300S
Camp	Milton Abbot	424798	300N	RE	:	110709	100N
Bridge	Bickleigh	937076	200N	RE	:	114710	On line
				RE	:	116707	400S
				RE	:	123715	On line
				LS	:	087692	400S
				RE	:	059684	400S
				RE	:	074686	300S
				RE	:	077685	500S
				LS	:	089693	400S
				RE	:	083692	100S
				RE	:	114714	400N
				RE	:	116707	400S
				RE	:	071685	200S
				Stg Sts	:	103700	400S
				RES	Bishops Cannings	066681	300S
				LB	:	059685	500N
				RE	:	052674	300E

## WILTSHIRE (CONTINUED)

RB	Bishop's Cannings	047678	400N
RB	:	038667	200S
RB	:	040667	300S
RB	:	058680	On line
RB	Ogbourne St Andrew	163736	On line
RB	:	151731	100N
RB	:	162732	400S
RB	:	179748	300N
RE	:	182744	300S
RB	:	187744	400S
RB	Roundway	005647	400S
Ditch	Overton Down	120712	100S
:	:	130715	400S
RectErthw	Bishop's Cannings	040671	100N
Camp	Bromham	001647	200S
Earthwk	Ogbourne St George	205754	500S

## OXFORDSHIRE

NONE

## BERKSHIRE

NONE

## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

RES	Ivinghoe	961169	500N
Camp	:	961169	500N
Moat	Aston Clinton	877122	300N

## BEDFORDSHIRE

NONE

## HERTFORDSHIRE

NONE

## CAMBRIDGESHIRE

NONE

## SUFFOLK

Cross	Bungay	337897	200N
Castle	:	336897	300N
Hills	:	336896	200N
Porch	Bury St Edmunds	853639	On line
Hall	:	853643	400N

## WILTSHIRE STONES

STONEHENGE AVENUE	126425	STONEHENGE CIRCLE	123422	LONGSTONES	087692-089693
AVEBURY CIRCLE	110692	AVEBURY RING: STG & FALLEN STONES	103700		
BERWICK ST JAMES	071393	COATE	181824	WOODHENGE	151432
LANGDEAN	118658	WINTERBOURNE BASSETT	095755	SARSEN STONES	116723

## THE LINE PASSING THROUGH AVEBURY RING INSTEAD OF BURY CATHEDRAL

## WILTSHIRE

Round barrows	Avebury	126713	90N
:	:	123711	50N
:	:	123712	150N
:	:	114710	420N
:	:	116707	20N
:	:	123715	450N
:	:	117704	330S
:	:	094692	320S
Longstones	:	087692	50N
Round barrows	:	074686	140N
:	:	076684	170S
:	:	077685	120S
Longstones	:	089693	40N
Round barrow	:	083692	260N
:	:	116707	20N
:	:	106701	50S
:	:	115703	330S
:	:	071685	200N
Stone circle	:	103700	ON LINE
Round barrow	Bishop's Cannings	045666	330S
:	:	051668	450S
:	:	066681	60N
Long barrow	:	066678	240S
:	:	063676	280S
Round barrows	:	052674	100N
:	:	034668	450N
:	:	038667	140N
:	:	040667	30N
:	:	038661	460N
:	:	058680	380N
:	Ogbourne St Andrew	163736	440N
:	:	162732	90N
:	:	163730	160S
:	:	182744	240N
:	Ogbourne St George	187744	30S
:	Aldbourne	248774	240S
:	:	250773	450S
:	:	247771	490S
:	Roundway	005647	110S
:	West Overton	126711	110S
:	Winterbourne Monkton	124716	500N
:	Bromham	001647	100N

NOTES AND NEWS  
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Sheffield Moot

The Northern Earth Mysteries Group Moot at Arnold Freeman Hall, Sheffield in October was a most interesting and worthwhile day, well worth getting up at 4.00 a.m. to travel up! The first speaker was R.D.Y. Perrett, a subscriber to the original Ley Hunter, who spoke on a triangle of stones near Whitby which he believes were to mark moonrise points. After lunch Derrick Wilbie-Chalk spoke on his seminarium and earth mysteries project in Northumberland. The slides brought back pleasant memories to those who had been at the NEM weekend moot in Northumberland. After coffee Philip Heselton spoke on the Scots Pine - the tree of the Old Straight Track - its ley and legendary significances, and speculations published in "Skyways and Landmarks Revisited". Then I gave a brief talk on the STAR Fellowship, after which Rob Wilson gave us a whirlwind Earth Mysteries tour with slides of the Sheffield area. After the evening meal break Patrick Harding gave a spectacular audio-visual using slides of natural subjects.

A Lancashire clump.

As it happened, we again travelled north the following weekend, to attend a christening at Clayton Brook, near Preston in Lancashire. I was most interested to see that, next to the church (occupying the space of a small graveyard) was a very pleasant, compact hillside clump of Scots pines. The church itself was a Roman Catholic one, built in the early 19th century - a rather unusual stone design with a narrow copper spire above the porch, surmounted by a cross. The church inside had a very cosy atmosphere. Leaving the church it was clear that the clump and spire were visible from a considerable distance away - at least half a mile. The darker green trees projected above the others on the hill, as Philip had described in his talk.

The Brentford Griffin.

This book, on a very unusual visitor to the London skies, contains the depth of research we have come to associate with the name of Andrew Collins. The visitor was a griffin - a half-lion, half-eagle creature of mythology, claimed by several to have been seen over Brentford and reported widely in the media. As would be expected, there is no final answer, but local place-names and traditions show griffin associations. Published by Earthquest Books, it is fascinating for anyone who enjoys mysteries of any kind.

Goddess guidebook

Tsultrim Alliare (Via Muggia 4, 00195, Rome, Italy) is collecting information for a traveller's guidebook on places associated with goddesses or feminine power all over the world. Anyone who knows of any such place or places is invited to contact Miss Alliare with information on how to reach the place, the history

of the place, and any anecdotes concerning unusual occurrences such as synchronicities, unusual manifestations, unlikely incidents, visions etc. The motivation behind the book is her belief that to save the Earth the feminine must re-emerge and these places, like acupuncture points, must be activated.

Dodman?

On visiting the Nine Ladies stone circle in Derbyshire some years ago I was surprised to turn and find my son Peter standing in the middle of the circle holding two sticks like a dodman. He could give no explanation. Recently I saw him chipping at some roofing slate with a stone and found he had produced a perfect Neolithic-type leaf shaped arrowhead!

#### Folklore Frontiers

Paul Screeton, former "The Ley Hunter" editor, has brought out the first issue of a fascinating folklore magazine "Folklore Frontiers" dealing with "urban belief tales", including in its first issue beliefs about spiders and that of a high-ranking policeman that Arthur Scargill is in league with the Devil! Highly recommended.

#### EXCHANGE LIST

QUICKSILVER MESSENGER, c/o ELTI, Hotel Wisata International, PO Box 2457 Jkt., Jakarta, Indonesia.  
 CAERDROIA, 53, Thundersley Grove, Thundersley, Benfleet, Essex.  
 EARTHQUEST NEWS, 19, St. David's Way, Benfleet, Essex.  
 COMMON GROUND, 14, Northfold Road, Knighton, Leicester.  
 FORTEAN TIMES, 96, Mansfield Rd., London NW3. 2HX.  
 NORTHERN EARTH MYSTERIES, 170, Victoria Avenue, Hull HU5.3DY.  
 STONEHENGE VIEWPOINT, 2821, De La Vina Street, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93105, U.S.A.  
 THE PIPES OF PAN, 69, Cranbury Road, Reading, Berkshire.  
 FOLKLORE FRONTIERS, 5, Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS25. 2AT.  
 WORD SPIRIT, Basement Flat, 23, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire, SL1. 2DA.  
 THE LEY HUNTER, P.O. Box 13, Welshpool, Powys, Wales.  
 CIRCLE, Box 219, Mt. Horeb, WI 53572, U.S.A.  
 MAGONIA, 64, Alric Avenue, New Malden, Surrey.  
 EARTH FORCE, 12, Lynmouth Drive, Gilmarton, Lutterworth, Leicestershire.

Our thanks to all exchange publications, especially those who have mentioned us. Apologies to Fortean Times for not correcting their address before now!

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