

Touchstone

Surrey
Earth
Mysteries



No. 12

January 1986

A MOOT IN BURTON

.....

The Northern Earth Mysteries Group held their moot this year together with Earthlines (the Welsh and border E.M. group) in Burton-on-Trent, where the two territories meet. Chris Fletcher gave an inspiring guided tour of the old stones and sacred sites of Staffordshire with slides, followed by Leslie Grinsell, who showed us that Christianisation of ancient sites is certainly not limited to Britain. The Lichfield Women's Morris entertained us after the afternoon break, inviting some of us (including myself!) to participate in one dance! Then Michael Wysocki gave us some new insights into chambered tombs, followed by Paul Devereux talking about his recent tour of the U.S.A. The moot was rounded off by an audio-visual sent by Chris Ashton of Quicksilver Messenger, on the living earth culture in Indonesia, where he is currently living. Unfortunately I was unable to stay for the visit to sites in the area the following day, but I am told this was a very interesting visit.

We are planning a visit in the spring to visit Mother Ludlam's Hole and the surrounding sites, together with the London Earth Mysteries Circle. We do not know the date yet but hope to include a stop press slip giving this with this issue.

.....

THE CAULDRON AND THE CAVE

The legends of Mother Ludlam and the Frensham Cauldron

by Chris Hall

In the year 1216 the monks of Waverley Abbey had a problem. The spring which had supplied them since the Abbey's foundation in 1128 had dried up. According to the "Annals of Waverley Abbey", the spring

was called "Ludwell". This is the first written reference to the place which, almost eight centuries later, has become surrounded by an intriguing tapestry of folklore involving a witch, the devil, fairies, a sacred hill, a great stone, the landscape of Surrey and a medieval church. The last issue of Touchstone published one version of the legend of Mother Ludlam's Hole, but this is a mere fraction of the tale. What follows is the legend as I have pieced it together from a variety of sources, but the full story is yet to be told.

With the exception of Stony Jump, all of the places mentioned can be visited. Admission to Waverley Abbey ruins is free. They stand in a meander of the River Wey two miles south east of Farnham. The cave is beside a bridleway through Moor Park. The Devil's Jumps are now part of a nature reserve open to the public provided visitors keep to the paths, and Kettlebury Hill is on land used by the army but on which the public may walk. Frensham is three miles south west of Waverley.

The problem was solved by a monk named Symon. He searched the area at length, until he discovered a "living spring". With "much difficulty and invention...labour and sweating" he enlarged it and, by means of a system of underground channels, brought the water to the Abbey. The new spring was named St. Mary's Well (also, incidentally, the dedication of Frensham Church). Although the "Annals" do not make it clear, it has been assumed by modern writers that the two springs were in fact close together, and that Symon dug into the hillside nearby to find water. If so, he created the cave we now see, overgrown with ivy but with a moderate sized entrance. It rapidly contracts down to an extremely low arch through which a small stream flows. It is no longer set out with benches and pavements, as described by Grose in 1785, (last issue), though stone walls can still be seen. It is perhaps a third of the way up the hillside. Higher up, a little to the south, is a much smaller cave which can only be entered by crawling and ends after a short passage. It is said to be the original Ludwell, but today goes by the name of Father Fooke's Cave.

After Brother Symon's endeavours in 1216 no more is heard of the cave until 1673, when antiquarian John Aubrey visited Frensham to collect information for his book on the county of Surrey (published in 1718). He was told by "a Gentleman" that Ludwell was named after Lud, King of the South Saxons, who went there to bathe his wounds after a battle. He adds that the monks of Waverley "made it their Helicon, where they met their Muses". He then appends the full text (in Latin) of the discovery of the well by Symon.

Separately Aubrey gives an account of "an extraordinary great kettle or cauldron" to be seen in Frensham Church. There was a belief that it had been conveyed there by the fairies long, long ago. Frensham Church is medieval: it was dedicated in 1239. This account of the cauldron is interesting, not least because it had not at this telling been linked with Ludwell.

The fairies carried the cauldron to Frensham from a place called Borough Hill, which Aubrey tells us was a mile distant, in the tithing of Churt. Churt is to the south, but there is no Borough Hill on modern maps. On the hill was a cave where "some have fancied to hear

music", and "a great stone lying along, of a length of about six feet". Anyone in need of something would go to the stone, knock upon it, state what it was they needed to borrow and when they would return it. A voice would be heard, telling them when to come back. At the appointed time the item would be found by the stone. The cauldron was borrowed in this manner, but not returned at the agreed time. When the borrower eventually came back with it, it was not received, nor was anything ever loaned again. Aubrey adds the intriguing remark that "the people saw a great fire that night", but tells us no more except that it was not the heath on fire. He believed none of this, however, saying that the cauldron was an ancient utensil used by the villagers in Love Feasts. The cauldron is mentioned again in 1736 in Salmon's "History of Surrey". He mentions the story that it was brought to Frensham by the fairies and also that it had come originally from Waverley Abbey. He accepts neither, writing that the cauldron was of a type commonly used for the entertainment of parishioners at the weddings of poor maids.

The account by Grose (1785) is given in full in Touchstone 11. By this time the cauldron is linked with Ludwell, where lived a witch called Mother Ludlam. She helped the fairies in much the same way as the fairies of Borough Hill, by lending utensils, but note that the cave must be visited at midnight, the borrower must turn around three times and repeat three times their requirement. They must also promise to return it within two days. (The fairies apparently were in the habit of loaning things for a year or more). The transference of the legend to the cave is all the more interesting because it has now gained characteristics more usually associated with standing stones and stone circles. (For examples, see "The Secret Country").

Since then the story has gained even more variations, some of them linking back to earlier forms. This may suggest more than one version was current at the same time and that the differing forms became confused. It seems possible that an original story concerning fairies who lived in Borough Hill became muddled with a later story concerning the white witch Mother Ludlam. The name "borough" can denote hill, earthwork, tumulus and so on. There are folklore accounts of fairies living in mounds or tumuli, entered by moving aside a great rock. I wondered if the three tumuli on the ridge across Frensham Common may be implied, but there is no large stone here now. They are just under a mile to the east. However, later forms of the legend not only become distinctly bizarre, they also suggest the probable true location intended by Aubrey.

The Farnham Herald in 1985 published a classic eye-catching headline. Under the title "Condemned to be Chased by a Three-legged Cauldron" Reg Baker recounted a version of the legend during his boyhood in Frensham in the 1920s. The cauldron could be borrowed by climbing the hill south of the village called Stony Jump, and whispering to the fairies who lived there through a hole in the huge outcrop of rock on the summit. All went well until, as usual, the cauldron was not returned on time. The fairies refused it and condemned the unfortunate borrower to have it follow him wherever he went. Eventually, tormented by the presence of this three-legged pursuer, he sought sanctuary in the village church. There he collapsed, dead, leaving the cauldron trapped. This is similar to the version given in an account in the church porch, though Mr. Baker

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 Road, 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 5, Brecon. Powys, Wales.
 CIRCLE, Box 219, Mt. Horeb, WI 53572, U.S.A.
 MAGONIA, John Dee Cottage, 5, James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard,
 London, S.W.14. 8HB.
 EARTH FORCE, 12, Lynmouth Drive, Gilmarton, Lutterworth,
 Leicestershire.
 BEYOND SCIENCE, Neptunian Publishing Co. Ltd., First Floor, 7, Chapel
 Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11. 1EG.

Our thanks to all exchange publications, especially those who have mentioned us.

TOUCHSTONE is published by Surrey Earth Mysteries Group, 25, Albert Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey. Sub TWO POUNDS for four issues, please make cheques payable to J. Goddard. All articles are welcome and all are welcome at our monthly meetings in Addlestone. IF YOUR SUBSCRIPTION IS DUE AN "X" WILL FOLLOW THIS SENTENCE:

TONY WEDD

New Age Pioneer

Philip Heselton

TONY WEDD (1919—1980) is best remembered for his intuitive linking of UFO sightings with ancient landmarks.

But his life story reveals many other sides to this strangely archetypal figure, who was an artist, designer, RAF pilot, teacher, psychic and writer, expounding a distinctive philosophy encompassing both the radical and the mystical.

He founded the STAR Fellowship to welcome and publicise contacts with flying saucers, which led him to construct mysterious 'free energy' devices like the Wenceslas Boots and the Cosmic Coffee Pot.

His pioneering work on leys, earth energies, Stonehenge and the Glastonbury Zodiac, and his later years as a youth hostel warden in Australia are fully chronicled.

Few who are interested in the background to the New Age and Alternative movements will fail to be fascinated by the life of Tony Wedd.

27 photographs Northern Earth Mysteries
 160pp. 170 Victoria Avenue
 HULL HU5 3DY

ISBN 0 948635 01 0

£3.00

6

B O O K S

MORE SURREY TALES, by Matthew Alexander, pub. Countryside Books, Newbury.

In Surrey the fairies used to be called "Pharisees" - some were helpful, some mischievous. A common prank was to ride horses all night, so they would be sweating and panting in the morning. In this second collection of Surrey tales Matthew Alexander relates more folklore of the county, with perhaps a little less material to interest earth mysteries researchers in this sequel.

My criticisms of his earlier book rarely apply here. He has learnt how to refer to historical truth without losing the charm of folklore. The book includes a tale of King Arthur in Guildford, notes on Morris dancing in the county and an anecdote about the deeds and misdeeds of various elementals. A section on phantom coaches gives no less than eight examples. There is a case of dreaming foretelling death, while buried in another is a reference to the powers of flints with a natural hole. There is a good account of Surrey's most famous folk story, that of Mother Ludlam.

Perhaps the most interesting tale combines a number of motifs, and concerns Matthew Trigg who suddenly and mysteriously vanished from the village of Ash where he lived. (Ash is near Aldershot, but just in Surrey). After extensive searches had failed to find any trace, the villagers decided to consult a wizard.

He was able to tell them of Matthew's fate. They would find him far to the east, under the power of the Pharisees. The wizard said he could help them, and summoned a flying horse. The horse set off eastward, guided by magical powers, until it came across Matthew in a land far away, standing among a group of fairies. The horse easily eluded the fairies, though they tried to capture it, and Matthew was able to scramble onto its back. Then it soared into the air, and flew back westward along the North Downs, straight as an arrow towards Ash. This almost proved to be disastrous, for it would not respond to Matthew's attempts to guide it. As he held on grimly he saw the steeple of Ash church lay directly in their path. With a great crash they struck the steeple, leaving it bent and Matthew with a limp for the rest of his life.

This tale is unlike any other from Surrey, and should perhaps be treated cautiously. The ridge of the North Downs is capped with a number of prehistoric sites, not to mention the ancient Harroway. Ash church is on Norman foundations; the term "straight as an arrow" may be a folk memory of a ley.

There is much scope for investigation here. The church steeple is no longer bent, having been rebuilt in 1864.

Chris Hall

LONDON EARTH MYSTERIES CIRCLE

1987 PROGRAMME 1st QUARTER

7.00 PM

at the

THE MARIA ASSUMPTA CENTRE

23, Kensington Square. W8.

In the St Andrews Hall Seminar Room.

TUBE : High Street Kensington

BUSES : A2,9,27,28,31,33,49,52,52a,73.

All are welcome to meetings - non-members £1.50 (Conc's 75p)

Light refreshments included - members 50p.

. . . On the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month . . .

LONDON EVENINGS

JANUARY 13th JIMMY GODDARD - giving an illustrated talk on Tuesday. Will be held in a different room just for tonight. his co-authored book "SKYWAYS AND LAND-MARKS REVISITED", about the connection between LEYS, UFO's and TREES.

JANUARY 27th JOHN BOWMAN - speaking about his past Tuesday experiences DOWSING FOR TREASURE.

FEBRUARY 10th FREYA AESWYNN - Northern Heritage Teacher, will Tuesday be speaking on her especial study area; the RUNES.

FEBRUARY 24th INFORMATION EVENING on the PREHISTORIC SITES of Tuesday KENT - a video show and preparation for our field trip to Kent.

MARCH 10th CHRISTINE WESTWOOD - a qualified holistic Tuesday healer will be talking about AROMATHERAPY.

MARCH 24th ART EVENING - members and non-members are Tuesday invited to bring in their paintings, prints, photographs, slides and written work etc. connected with EARTH MYSTERIES. An evening of discussion and presentation.

FIELD TRIPS

JANUARY 10th ROLLRIGHT STONES - INSTRUMENT FAMILIARISATION. A Saturday day of training for future Dragon Project site monitoring. Contact John Merron - 450 4398.

FEBRUARY 7th AVEBURY - mini-bus day trip to circle and local Saturday sites. Members £6, non-members £8.

MARCH 8th KENT - another mini-bus outing, this time to the area around the COLDRUM CHAMBER TOMB. Members £5, non-members £7. Forms from Rob Stephenson.