

Touchstone

Surrey
Earth
Mysteries



No. 15

October 1987

LEY HUNTER'S PARADISE

No-one can deny that Wiltshire was a major neolithic centre. The evidence is everywhere visible, and so we decided to pay the area a visit this year. The cottage where we stayed was not incongruous - a small thatched house that must have been several hundred years old, though with later additions. The garden was bright with flowers and heavy with the scent of lavender. Within yards was the extremely powerful church of St. Mary, Bishops Cannings, and Avebury circles were only a few miles away.

The church, a tall, spired building, was of Early English and Norman design, and its similarity to Salisbury Cathedral was due to the influence of the Bishops of Salisbury, who once had a palace here.

It contains a medieval meditation desk with rather depressing writings about sin and the shortness of life, but the church nevertheless had quite a happy atmosphere and there was considerable head-hum. In fact, this was noticed in the cottage too, and even outside it on the side facing the church.

The east-west axis of the church cuts through one corner of the cottage and the churchyard cross has been erected on this alignment. It is not an acceptable ley mapwise though, but there are indications that it may be a ley, for it passes through a tumulus north of Roundway, the summit of Milk Hill near the white horse there, a spotmark between Bromham and Rowde and a stretch of straight road in Melksham.

There are, however, two better alignments passing through the church. One links it with the centre of Avebury and the Norman church of St. John in Devizes. It also goes through some tumuli, cross-roads and cross-tracks. There is also a stone on this line, on the bend in the road near the church. It is clearly not ancient for it is not deeply embedded (it rocks when pushed), but something must have caused someone to place it right on this line, which also goes through a field gate visible from here.

The best of the three alignments through the church goes through a cross-tracks with church in Trowbridge, Seend church and nearby junction, Bishops Cannings church, a tumulus on Easton Hill, another on All Cannings Down and one south of Overton.

On Tuesday, the day after our arrival, we visited Barbury Castle,

a hill-fort and country park near Swindon. Although disappointed that the information displays had been removed to make way for a toilet (!!) we found the site very beautiful and a haven for the botanist, being covered with flowers of every hue. There was a good all-round view from the ramparts; two large clumps were visible, whose alignment skirted the hill. On checking the map, I found they were not barrows as I had thought, though they aligned with one nearby. They were probably planted in the eighteenth century, as many Wiltshire clumps were, during what must have been an upsurge in the subconscious impulse to re-mark the leys. They certainly mark a good alignment, which skirts Windmill Hill neolithic camp, goes through Chisledon and Rowde churches, and a cross-roads-tracks ley centre which is also crossed by the base-line of Doug Chaundy's White Horse Triangle.

On the way back from Barbury, we saw an alignment that would have gladdened the heart of both Tony Wedd and Alfred Watkins. Two small Scots pine clumps clearly aligned visually with a tumulus on a ridge, and a straight track joined them. The map showed that where the alignment crosses the road it also crosses the track of the Roman Bath road. It goes through Hilmarton church, a well near Bradenstoke Abbey, and the main cross-roads at Great Somerford.

On Wednesday, Emma's sixteenth birthday, we decided to celebrate by seeing the sunrise at Avebury. We just managed to get to the north-east quadrant in time. The circle seemed much more powerful than during the day - and we were not alone, for two others were also on the bank, patiently waiting for dawn.

The following morning I had an early morning walk to try to get to the Kitchen Barrow, a nearby long barrow which has a protruding stone. I could not reach it, however, for the footpaths were blocked. I did, however, get to the barrow on Easton Hill, from which the church is visible, and saw the Wansdyke, which is quite impressive. Devizes Museum, which we visited later in the day, is extremely interesting and there are some beautiful model reconstructions of Avebury, Woodhenge and Stonehenge, as well as various hillforts and camps.

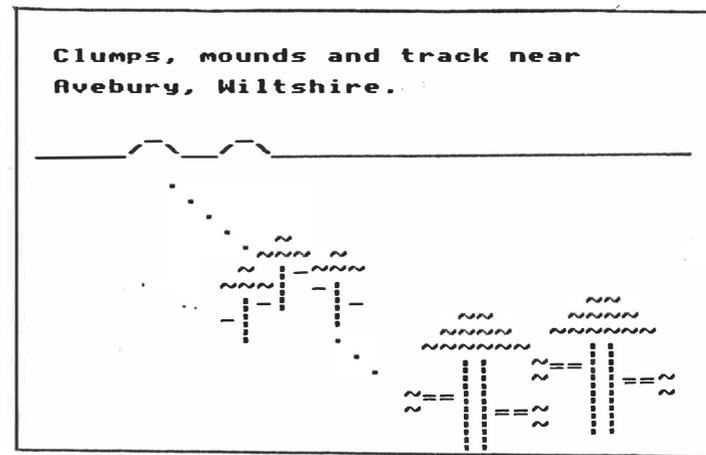
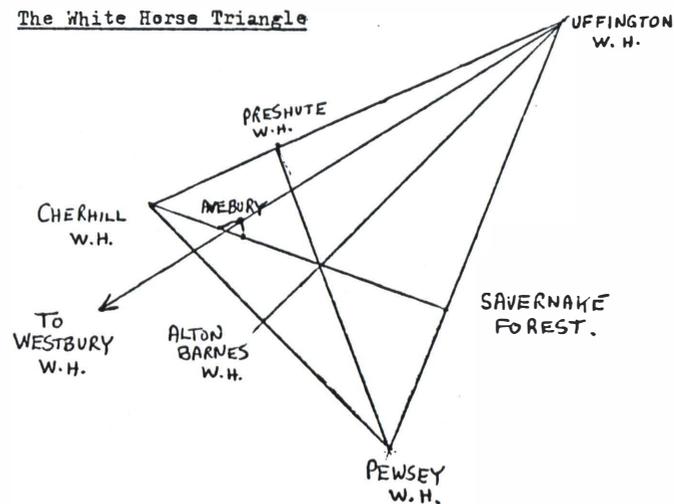
Our last day, Friday, was taken up by a visit to Lacock. This National Trust village is very picturesque and reminiscent of Chiddingstone (also NT) on a larger scale. The thing I noticed first was a lovely clump, mainly of horse chestnut, by the junction leading into the village, with many trees having pronounced spiralling. The photography museum and the Abbey and the church were interesting, but I could not explore them as I would have wished as the children were rather irritable that day.

On the way back from Lacock we had a good view of the Cherhill White Horse, one of Wiltshire's famous stable of chalk horses that stare haughtily at the motorist. Doug Chaundy, in the sixties, found that they form a fairly precise isosceles triangle with a perpendicular. Uffington, the only horse known to be ancient, forms the apex, and the base-line is made of the Cherhill, Alton Barnes and Pewsey horses. These were cut in 1780, 1812 and 1937 respectively, and no previous horses are known on the sites, though prehistoric sites are near two of them. Also, the Alton Barnes horse is a little off the line, though still near enough to make the triangle

remarkable.

A few miles up the western side of the triangle is another horse, at Preshute Down, and if a line is drawn to Pewsey it crosses the perpendicular west of Lockeridge. A line from the Cherhill horse through this point also goes through the two junctions south of Avebury (on roads approximating the two stone avenues that existed there) and skirts the base of Silbury Hill. Also, if a line is drawn from Uffington to Westbury, where there is a modern horse on an ancient horse site found by T.C. Lethbridge, the line seems to pass through the centre of Avebury. There is no horse where this line meets the other side of the triangle in Savernake Forest; if the Marlborough horse was intended for this it was misplaced.

All the white horses are best visible from the air, which led to the idea that the area enclosed in the triangle is of very special significance and the horses are to mark this for extraterrestrial visitors. The newness of some of the horses need not bother us too much, for we are quite familiar with the phenomenon of subconscious siting by now.



NOTES AND NEWS

Meeting of the ways

This summer I was pleased to have the opportunity of visiting Royston, a most interesting little town not far from Cambridge. I had heard of it due to a mention in a taped lecture given by Tony Wedd; it is the crossing-point of the Roman Ermine Street and the Icknield Way, and, as I was to find out, of a number of leys as well. Also, the original county boundary between Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire ran along the Icknield Way at this point, though when the town grew it was diverted so all the town would be in Hertfordshire. It then grew further into Cambridgeshire, however, and the boundary seems to neatly cut the school in half!

The crossing-point is quite impressive on the map with the straight Ermine Street leading into it (though it does not seem so straight when driving along it). The Royse Stone has now been moved unfortunately and is on a brick plinth nearby. It was the base of a cross (or a cross was built on it) traditionally by a Lady Roysia in the middle ages. In Roman times the cross-roads had no settlement; this did not come until the medieval abbey was built here.

Near the cross-roads is a mysterious but obviously man-made "cave" beneath the street with religious drawings on the walls. It has been associated with the Knights Templar, but whoever built this unique structure must have been acknowledging some inherent sanctity of the place, as did those who built the long barrow and round barrows on nearby Therfield Heath. The impressive Grand Avenue of Wimpole Hall aligns on this hill; the house and a folly tower to the north have also been placed on this alignment.

One of the best alignments through the cross-roads goes through a large clump outside the town, visible from the road, very near a triangulation point half a mile further on, to Goffer's Knoll, a tumulus on a ridge with a very large clump and an old double tree nearby on the alignment. It then goes through another clump, a cross-roads, a stretch of straight track near Duxford marked with a public footpath sign but now cultivated over, an unnamed earthwork near Balsham and Weston Colville church.

The alignment going through the abbey church goes through five points in about five miles; the cross-roads and stone, the church, a milestone at Barley, Little Chishill church and "Mill Mound". Clearly Royston is a most important place and would repay further study.

A Welsh ley

I found a remarkable ley when camping for the weekend in Wales with my family recently. It runs through the village of Cenarth, not far from Cardigan - a beautiful place beloved of fisherman, with a rushing river, a waterfall and an old watermill open to the public in which I was intrigued to see a sack on display stamped with the name of Watkins flour mills, Hereford.

St. Llawddog's church, nineteenth century but on an older site, is on a hill, and below it across the road is a mound called "Parc-y-domen" (field of the mound). This is called a motte in the guide book, but there seems to be some doubt as to whether it is the

site of the castle it is supposed to be - so it may be an ancient mound. The lady in the craft shop in front of it seemed strangely reluctant to tell me about it, though grudgingly let me go through her garden to photograph it, but said I could not go to it as it was on private land. I noticed in her garden there was a large standing stone, but due to her reticence I did not ask about it (it was not on this alignment). The mound is crowned with a deciduous clump.

In the churchyard, aligning with the mound and east end of the church, is the Gellidywell stone, not in its original position but apparently subconsciously re-sited. It was taken from its original position near the church (whether on the alignment or not cannot be determined) to be a headstone for the favourite horse of the squire! It was moved to its present position in 1896.

The alignment passes through a church in Hawen, a junction near Brongwyn, Parcycastell mound, the three points mentioned above, a junction with a mean-following track, Foel Drygarn settlement on Mynydd Preseli with two cairns and a triangulation point on the alignment, and a standing stone a little further on. (There were also a number of minor junctions and possible clumps). Preseli Mountain is, of course, the supposed source of the Stonehenge bluestones, and, though no doubt Paul Devereux will be cross, I drew a line on a small-scale map from the above settlement site to Stonehenge, and was intrigued to see that it seems to go through the site of Westbury White Horse (site of an older hill figure). So there is tenuous evidence of a link between Wales and Wiltshire, and of the universality of the ley system.

Putting the "stone" in Addlestone

At a recent meeting of the Addlestone Historical Society, I was shown this extract from "Chertsey Cartulary", giving reference to a stone in Addlestone, which may have been connected with the name despite the "Attel's Dene" derivation deduced from other sources. It is a survey of the boundaries of Godley Hundred:

"Metes and bounds of the Hundred of Godley, perambulated and surveyed by the lord John Hermondesworth, Abbot of Chertsey, William Sydeney his steward, Ludlow esquire and keeper of the forest, with a multitude of people of the whole countryside convoked therefor on the 7th day of the month of June, 24th year of the reign of King Henry VI.

"First from Waymouth a mydde the Streme to Waybrigge endelonge the highway to the crosse in hammemore. Fro that crosse to Wobourbrigge as the hyewey ledith, And fro Wobourbrigge endelonge the borne to the Wythis in Stampulonde. And fro the Wythis endelonge the borne to the pole above Crocfordbrigge and so over to the Stone and fro the Stone to the Wey in Marfeldeheth'e that cometh fro Wobourne and ledith to Spynnecrosse, and so forth to Spynne crosse..."

It has to be said that a seventh century survey of the boundary does not mention the stone; nevertheless the mention here is interesting, as is the implication of crosses at Hamm Moor and Spinney Hill. The survey is quite explicit about the boundary for part of the way, but does not specify where "the pool above Crockford Bridge" is, where the boundary meets "the way in Marleheath" (Church Road) or its route crossing between the two. Chertsey Museum do not have maps of

the hundred of any accuracy, but another member of Addlestone Historical Society mentioned that the manor boundary as shown on the enclosure map displayed on the museum wall would probably be the same.

This seems to be the case (there are no glaring deviations); it travels along the Bourne to a point above Crockford Bridge, then crosses to Parklands, a cul-de-sac adjoining the Liberty Lane cross-roads before going obliquely across to Church Road at the junction of The Grove. It does not go straight across, however, but makes a turn part way along its length.

Where would we expect a boundary stone to be on this line? There are two logical possibilities; at the Liberty Lane crossroads or the other point where the boundary changes course. We know there is no stone at the crossroads today, but I decided to "walk the bounds" as far as possible with my son Peter, to see what I could find. The 1:25000 map shows, very interestingly, that although now a residential area, the property boundaries have been strongly influenced by the old manor/hundred line. Three cul-de-sacs terminate on it (Burleigh Close, Audley Close and Fieldhurst Close); however, the most spectacular part of the boundary on the ground is the point where it changes course. This is accessible from Caselden Close, to which there is pedestrian access from Brighton Road. Just past the bend is a green path on the right leading to a small park with a disused swing frame. On entering the main part of the park, turn sharp right and the boundary is marked by a chain-link fence directly ahead, and a hedge separating two private gardens at an angle to it. It was certainly amazing to me to realise, standing here, that these overtly twentieth-century structures marked a boundary over a thousand years old - though of course the real markers were the invisible lines of property which have greater permanence than any tangible marks. Was Attel's Stone on this junction? We may never know for sure, but certainly Abbot Hermondesworth and his "multitude" must have "perambulated" this way.

I was interested to see that the Liberty Lane cross-roads is on the alignment that goes through Ottershaw and Weybridge churches and the Samaritan Centre clump, mentioned in a previous Touchstone. There is also another interesting one going through the course-change point - this goes to Spinney Hill, perhaps through the site of the cross mentioned.

Readers of "Cosmic Friends" will remember my feelings that St. Augustine's Church is on the site of a stone circle. Although modern, two people have independently said it has the feeling of a much older church. Several alignments pass through it, including a midsummer sunrise line.

In addition to this, Stan Eaves, a local historian, has found yet another stone on an old map - near Ongar Hill, Addlestone.

Caustic leys

In "The Cabinet of Arts and General Instructor", by Hewson Clark Esq., of Emmanuel College Cambridge, and John Dougall, A.M., published in 1817, the term "leys" is given as an old chemical term referring to solutions of alkalis.

Supernatural Clump

The women's magazine "My Weekly" published a most interesting article on supernatural animals in their September 12th issue, but the most intriguing thing to me was that it was illustrated by a picture of a large clump of Scots pines with a track leading to it, with a superimposed drawing of a ghostly dog above it. The clump was not mentioned in any of the anecdotes in the article, nor was it even named, although I did hear from Tony Wedd many years ago that Keston Mark clump is associated with a black dog ghost. A query to the editor about this was not answered. Why was a clump used to illustrate this article?

London meetings

The following meetings of the London Earth Mysteries Circle will be held at the Maria Assumpta Centre, Kensington Square:

- October 27th - Celts evening, probably with a video show. Social evening and opportunity to bring slides, photographs or reminiscences.
- November 10th - Dusty Miller, the magic stick man, will speak on trees and tree spirits.
- November 24th - Religions and Beliefs evening, probably with video show.
- December 8th - Caroline Wise and Alan Cleaver will enact and explain a traditional mummer's play.

Sarum

This most ambitious novel by Edward Rutherford, published by Century Hutchinson, spans the time from the Mesolithic age to the present day, following the fortunes of fictitious families in the Salisbury area. Although it does not stray from "acceptable" history into our areas, it seems to "almost" do so on some occasions, and is a most fascinating read.

Our meetings

Don't forget we still have meetings in Addlestone on the second Thursday of each month (except December).

Moots mon!

What do you call someone interested in earth mysteries? My colleagues at work know - to them I am and always will be a "mooter"!

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TOUCHSTONE. Newsletter of the Surrey Earth Mysteries Group. Quarterly, £2 for four issues.

AMSKAYA. Newsletter of the STAR Fellowship, concerned with extraterrestrial communication. Quarterly, £2 for four issues.

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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:



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