

Touchstone

Surrey
Earth
Mysteries



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NORTHERN MOOT 1989

The Moot this year was held in the Central Library at Scarborough, a windswept spot on the north-east coast. Rob Wilson introduced the moot by saying that this was the group's tenth anniversary year - it had the longest-running local earth mysteries magazine and covered a very large area.

Philip Heselton continued the anniversary theme by speaking (with slides and recordings from members) about the group's activities during its ten years of existence. He began by speaking of an earlier and longer-running organisation - Alfred Watkins' Straight Track Club which had lasted from 1926 for more than twenty years. We saw some photographs of the Club, who had visited Stonehenge ten times.

However, after it had disbanded, the next major meeting of ley hunters was in Hereford in 1971, the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of leys. It was organised by John Michell and Paul Screeton, the editor of *The Ley Hunter* at the time.

We saw many slides relating to the group, and a number of people had sent taped messages telling what it had meant to them over the years. These included Paul Devereux, John Billingsley, Phil Reeder, Edna Whelan and myself.

After lunch, Edna Whelan spoke on Yorkshire holy wells, on which she has recently co-authored a book with Ian Taylor. She gave a definition of a holy well as a natural spring which did not dry up or freeze. Missionaries took over the well sites and rededicated them to saints. The most popular names in Yorkshire are Ladywell and Helen's well. St. Helen was the mother of Constantine, but the name may have originally been Elen, the Celtic goddess of the ways.

Holy wells were said to bring healing, prophecy or fertility, and different wells had different properties. Some required pilgrims to perform certain actions, such as dropping in pins or hanging rags from nearby trees.

We saw slides of a very large number of wells - only a few can be mentioned here, but they are all listed in the book. The Sulphur Well at Salton had a smell of that substance and there was an instance of stomach trouble cured after two doses. The local doctor would prescribe the water. There are three holy wells near the powerful spot of Lastingham. Newton Dale Well is chalybeate and it has had ceremonies attached to it. It is only approachable up a steep hillside, however; the Forestry Commission were asked to make a path, and they did.

Near Scarborough, there is the Old Man's Mouth, and Ladywell on the headland (which we visited the following day). Claymore Well had a legend of fairies and cured children of whooping cough. St. Wilfred's Well, Ripon was built by the founder of the cathedral, and there is a Robin Hood's Well at Fountains Abbey. Many other wells were described; the research has been very thorough and showed that holy wells were obviously a very important part of people's lives in the area.

After this, there were several short talks. The first was from Helen Woodley, but given by proxy by Rob Wilson as she was not able to be present. There were some pleasing slides of sites in the snow, but the information with them seemed somewhat sketchy, which was a pity.

Simon Kingsley then spoke with slides on the similarity of some of the markings on ancient stones. These seemed to be in three groups - parallel grooves about 2 cm. wide, hollows in stone tops about 8-10 cm. across, and cup-marks near the base - often only one. He said, however, one has to be careful - some stones had bullet holes as they were used for target practice during the war. We then saw a slide which seemed to show a ley running across the countryside as a faint line.

The next speaker was Bob Trubshaw who spoke about the hare pie scrambling and bottle kicking Easter traditions at Hallaton in Leicestershire. The village has a church (on a mound) dedicated to St. Michael and All Angels. In the porch is a Norman tympanum depicting an angel and a dragon. There are also two "crosses" in the village - one is actually cone-shaped with a ball on top.

The hare pie scrambling takes place on an ancient earthwork; the "bottles" (actually casks) are then thrown into the hollow and a kind of football game ensues between Hallaton and a neighbouring village.

I then mentioned a line I had seen on the ground during a recent hot air balloon flight; this was followed by John Hall talking about Merseyside and Wirral sites.

After tea, John Barker of Whitby spoke on curiosities of Blackamore. This includes the North York Moors National Park, but is slightly larger than the park, and it was uncultivated till Tudor

times. He usually takes his dog when visiting sites, and includes him in the slides to give an idea of the size of each.

We saw an ancient stone called the Face Stone, and several carved heads in various places, including a horse head at Lastingham. The Nine Stones near Osmotherley were shown, and the stones near Blakey Topping (previously visited on a NEM weekend moot) in the snow. These were followed by two stones incorporated into walls, one at Seaton Carew near Hartlepool.

John said that his dog's behaviour at some stones is unusual - at some he will lie down as if they are a dog he knows - and one by a stream is greeted as a long-lost friend. He will also sometimes take his ball to a stone.

A number of other stones in the area were then shown, including Bazedale Cross, which is a reused Roman altar.

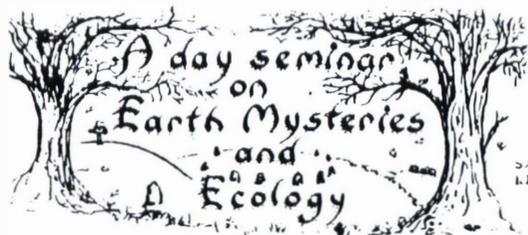
The final talk of the Moot was by Ian Taylor, who spoke on the Giant of Penhill. Penhill is in Wensleydale, and is full of myths and legends. He researched for over four years to write his book on the subject, and is still finding more. Legends include that of a giant on the summit, a herd of magical swine, a giant wolfhound and ravens. There is a legend of a giant in a castle, though no remains of buildings have been found on the hill.

Near the hill the ceremony of the Burning of Bartle is performed - and Ian thought that Bartle might be Belinus, the solar god. It is a most elaborate rite in which an effigy is carried to certain places where a rhyme is said. Each place is on a ley network. The climax of the ritual is the burning of the effigy.

The Penhill centre is a beacon site three yards square, and we saw a map of the associated lines. There is a mound on the side of the hill called the Giant's Grave, on an alignment to the beacon. Guy Ragland Philips found it a forbidding place.

Tezzy Parlour, on a ley from Penhill to Maiden Castle in Swaledale, is said to be haunted by spectral pigs. Parlour names crop up frequently in Yorkshire. We saw a number of other ancient sites in the Penhill system, including York Minster seen from the hill, and the Devil's Arrows, a premier Yorkshire megalithic site. Many of the places had astronomical significance of various kinds, including midsummer moonrise and the rising of Capella and Bellatrix. The tradition of a lost civilisation in a lake may be a memory of a lost megalithic culture.

On the following day there were visits to several ancient sites, though unfortunately I had to go fairly early. I did however visit Scarborough Castle and its holy well - now dry as the headland has been drained. Scarborough is an exposed, tempestuous place where one is very aware of the power of the elements. It was a good choice for the tenth anniversary moot.



SAT 21st OCTOBER BY
KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES

by Daniele Hart

London Earth Mysteries Circle in conjunction with SERA (Socialist Environment and Resources Association) had organised this Seminar in Kingston upon Thames on Saturday 21st October. The weather was dreadful; although the heavy rain had stopped by the time I set off to catch the bus, a gale force wind was blowing with a distinct threat of more rain. No Earth Mysteries enthusiast can be put off by bad weather, I thought. I was wrong. We waited.

When the number of the audience equalled the number of speakers, Rob Stephenson opened the Seminar. Max Reid, central co-ordinator of the "Life Style Movement" was our first speaker. The movement's motto is "Live simply that all may simply live".

He talked of the need to make a commitment to personal change, and reminded us that a quarter of the world's population uses four-fifths of its resources, leaving a meagre one-fifth to be shared between the remaining three-quarters. Max is an ex-teacher, and put the facts and figures to prove his case very skilfully, but his way of asking questions of his small audience brought back chilling memories of long ago. I never seemed to know the answers then either.

Chris Hall was the next speaker; he demonstrated the complexity of interactions in the world's environment with some well-chosen stories. The Greens do not seem to be interested in Earth Mysteries, yet to conserve the landscape means preserving Earth Mysteries sites - otherwise they could be lost for ever. Chris showed some lovely slides of heather-covered land and bluebell woods.

After the lunch break we were ready to start - but where was Ken Rees, our next speaker? Rob, who seemed to be able to handle any crisis, produced some excellent slides of Avebury and gave a very informative talk on the stones instead.

Mary Caine followed with an abundance of slides to back her discovery of a terrestrial zodiac around Kingston upon Thames. Her knowledge of the history of the area is extensive, and her enthusiasm enormous. She believes that "...zodiacs are still under construction, whether we know what we are doing or not..." Unfortunately we ran out of time, and although I remain unconvinced I was sorry that Mary Caine could not conclude her talk.

On the whole, a most enjoyable day, in very pleasant company. What a pity so few people turned up.

JOHN AUBREY'S SURREY

by Chris Hall

To the earth mysteries researcher the name of John Aubrey is most strongly associated with Wiltshire and Avebury. However, he is also author of a voluminous work about the county of Surrey, The Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey, which came about as the result of a commission to produce a Surrey volume for a proposed history of England. That scheme was abandoned, but Aubrey continued to gather notes for many years in the 17th century. These were eventually published after his death, with additions by the editor, in 1718.

It has to be observed there is minimal natural history, and the "antiquities" are predominantly inscriptions in churches or on gravestones; nonetheless there are items of interest concerning healing wells, folklore and archaeology. This article extracts a selection of Aubrey's observations, which may be of interest to readers of Touchstone. The complete work was reprinted in five volumes in 1975, and is available in a number of Surrey libraries.

Warlingham. In the parish of Chelsham are the remains of a Roman camp in the Road from Croydon into Kent; the Work or Rampart is oblong and single. (Aubrey appears to be referring to the earthwork at TQ375585, today regarded as pre-Roman).

Caterham. At a place called War-Coppice is a Camp, or Fortification, on the Top of a Hill, said to have been made against the Danes. Between Caterham and Coulsdon, in Stoneham Bottom, issues out sometimes (as against any change in our English Government) a Bourn, which overflows, and runs down in Smitham Bottom to Croydon. This is held by the Inhabitants to be ominous, and prognosticating something remarkable approaching, as it did before the happy restoration of King Charles in 1660, before the Plague of London in 1665 and in 1688, the Era of another change of the Constitution. (Possibly the camp referred to is the important site on the ridge of Farthing Down, and the bourne (stream) that rises on Coulsdon Common. However, this area is much altered by development since Aubrey knew it).

Lingfield In the Common is a fine Spring (empaled about) issuing out of a free-stone Basin. This I made an Experiment of with Powder of Galls, and it turned a deep Violet colour near black, and has the same Virtue with that at Tunbridge...We are indebted for the first Discovery of its signal Benefit to an old Man, who by its Medicinal Properties cured himself of an Ague about ten years since (1673). The Inhabitants are very fond of garlands made of Midsummer Silver, a little Herb, which continues all year of a bright Ash colour, and have crowded the Church and their own Houses with them. ("Midsummer Silver" is probably the plant now called silverweed, from its silvery grey-green leaves. This use of it is only recorded from Surrey).

Walton-on-Thames Upon St. George's Hill in this Parish is a camp of about twelve acres, a single Work oblong, with a Trench running down towards the Town. (This is perhaps the most noted Iron Age camp in Surrey, today much surrounded by houses). Here is a Fair on Wednesday

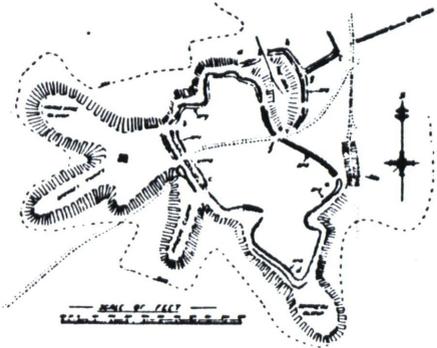
by Rob Stephenson

in Easter Week, considerable for Sheep, Cattle Etc., and another smaller one on St. Peter's Day.

Egham In the Parish Westward is Prune-well Hill where was a fine Tuft of Trees, a clear Spring and a pleasant Prospect to the East, over the level of Middlesex and Surrey. (This appears to be a reference to a prominent tree clump, on a hill with a well or spring. The location must lie in Windsor Great Park). By the Side of a Hill, near the Pits at Trotsworth, is a Medicinal Spring, less than a Quart thereof purges well. Also about a mile from this is another Medicinal Spring which cures agues. (Trotsworth survives only as a farm name. Ague is an old word for a severe fever. These springs should not be confused with modern Virginia Water, an artificial lake created in 1748 by the Duke of Cumberland).

Chertsey In this Town are two Fairs in the Year, which belonged to the Abbot. Afterwards two Fairs were granted by King James I. The Days are the first Monday in Lent, 3rd of May, the Morrow after St. James's Day, a Fortnight before Michaelmas. Of the great Abbey scarce any thing remains of the old Building, except the Out-walls about it; out of the Ruins is built a fair House. Westwards of this Town, on a steep Hill, stood St. Anne's Chapel, where, in the time of the Abbots, was Mass said every morning; it is a most Romancy Place, from whence is a Prospect over Middlesex and Surrey, London, to Hertfordshire and St. Albans, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, to Windsor Castle, St. Martha's Chapel, Hampton Court, Kingston, Hampshire &c. Methinks it looks like a place apt for Pilgrims to visit; but I could hear no account of that. Near the top of the Hill is a fine clear Spring, dressed with squared Stone. On the Hill Side lies a huge Stone (a conglomeration of Gravel and Sand) which they call the Devil's Stone, and believe it cannot be moved, and that Treasure is hid underneath. (St. Anne's Hill is at TQ026676. The modern map shows it as the site of a prehistoric fort. Its antiquity and folklore suggests an excellent research project for somebody living in the area. Aubrey's account of the places visible from the summit testify, from a time when Surrey was less wooded, to how intervisible sites many miles apart would have been). Aubrey refers again to the spring:

On the East part of this Hill is a Coppice, called Monke's Grove, wherein was a spring, much celebrated heretofore for its Virtues, which was lost a long time, and covered with Earth, and refound but two or three Years since; it has anciently been dressed with Stone, one square Stone is there still, by which they knew it to be the Well.



St. George's Hill as it was in 1911, just before the building started. The rampart running towards Otlands is the one mentioned by Aubrey. From "Surrey Archaeological Collections", Vol. XXIV, 1911.

The main objective of this excursion to Kent last August - our third joint outing - was to see an isolated group of Neolithic tombs in the Meaway valley. We met at the pleasant country church of SS. Peter and Paul at Trotscliffe, which is the starting point of the Coldrum ley. The large sarsen stones incorporated in its Saxon foundations are considered by many people to indicate the re-use of a former megalithic site. From the church the ley runs eastwards through Colerue Chamber Tomb, on to a orieo-up pond by a track crossing and over Snodland church with its adjacent ford across the Meaway. It ends at Burham Church four and a half miles away. This ley was examined in a television programme "The Strange Affair of the Old Straight Track" broadcast a couple of years ago - in it Bob Sykes used an updated version of Forest's and Behrend's computer analysis of the area (a study already known to give no statistical support to this particular ley) to dismiss the whole concept of leys.

Jimmy Goddard surprised us by bringing a newly acquired video camera and filming the whole trip - this must be one of the first regional E.M. outings entirely recorded on video. It is a technique with great potential for both amateur and professional presentations.

Although we were not here to follow the alignment, our next stop was at Coldrum Chamber Tomb, which is situated three-quarters of a mile away on a natural east-facing terrace about 15 feet high. The central chamber, now minus the capstone, is 13 feet long and was once covered by a rectangular mound measuring 70 feet by 55 feet. Although this mound has almost disappeared, it is clearly outlined by the great sarsens that once formed a revetment wall. Chalk quarrying in the early nineteenth century undermined one side causing the stones to slide down the front of the terrace leaving the burial chamber poised on the top edge. When this chamber was excavated in 1910, 22 skeletons were recovered; they were of varying ages but all bore a family resemblance. One skull was accorded a special significance by being placed on a stone shelf by itself.

A local legend says a tunnel runs from Coldrum to Trotscliffe church, and this is often cited as a surviving folk memory of the alignment. The story tells of two brothers who found the entrance and attempted to trace its cause. One brother walked the tunnel while playing a pipe while the other listened above and followed its course towards the church. However, at a certain point the music suddenly stopped and the brother was never seen again. Over the years Coldrum has suffered much damage, yet the end result, with its unusual split-level configuration, still makes an impressive monument.

We drove eastwards six miles, to Kit's Coty, which is on a hillside on the opposite side of the Medway. This famous monument - the remains of a long barrow - has been described by many antiquarians. Even Samuel Pepys visited this "thing of great antiquity" and records he was "mightily glad to it", as indeed we were, although less pleased to see it surrounded by railings, even if they do protect it. Stukeley's 1722 engraving, (taken from Michell's "Megalithomania"), which was reproduced in the last issue of Touchstone, depicts the monument with the remains of its 180 foot mound still quite visible. It derives its name from being the supposed burial place of Catigern, who was slain in battle by Horsa in the fifth century. Three witches from nearby Blue Bell Hill are said to have built it in a single night, although they needed the help of a fourth witch to get the capstone on. Another bit of local lore says that an object placed on the capstone at full moon will disappear if walked round three times.

The weather was good, and this elevated spot, with its distant views, made an ideal place for our picnic. Afterwards we descended the hill to have a look at Lower Kit's Coty, or the Countless Stones as it is also called. This jumble of about twenty stones, in the middle of a field, was an intact burial chamber until 1733, when an avaricious farmer knocked it down in the vain hope of selling it for road metal. The site also suffered in the 1987 hurricane when three tall elms that grew among the stones, and which had greatly contributed to its character, were destroyed. Sadly, it is under threat once again, this time from the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, which is planned to pass right beside it.

We returned to the cars, this time heading westwards, and literally drove over our next monument - Addington Long Barrow - which is cut diagonally by a country lane. The outline of its 200 foot mound is just about discernable and at the end a concentration of stones marks the spot where the burial chamber once stood. All is overgrown and there is not much to see, so we quickly moved on to the Chestnuts monument five minutes walk away.

This structure has been constructed from massive sarsens set on edge, mostly about ten feet high, and much the largest stones we had seen all day. The chamber measures twelve feet by seven and a half feet and is fronted by a colossal facade 45 feet wide. The covering mound was once 65 feet wide by 50 feet long, but lacked the revetment wall seen in most of the other sites we visited. In 1957 excavation revealed the remains of nine cremated individuals. It was at this time that many of the stones were righted, having been undermined by thirteenth century robber pits. The current owner Mrs. Bygraves is very

enthusiastic and knowledgeable about her site and shows round all her visitors. She has accumulated a good collection of flint tools from the site, and these can be freely examined. I wish all landowners were as sympathetic to the ancient monuments that chance has put in their care.

On the return journey we made a detour to the delightful Kentish village of Chiddingstone where Tony Wedd, the visionary and ley hunter of the sixties, once lived. We had come to see the Cringing Stone, a prominent natural outcrop of sandstone, not unlike a miniature Cheesewring, which we photographed and climbed before departing our separate ways.

NOTES AND NEWS

Ley indication?

On Sunday December 24th Philip Hesilton took me to see an apparent markstone he had found in Hardhorn, near Foulton-le-Fyde in Lancashire. It is near a road junction, and by a field gate. There seemed to be very faint indications of a line running from it into the distance, and when I turned I found this line aligned directly on the junction. The indications were not in the form of a visible line but merely in gaps in the landscape - possibly coincidental but I would like to view it from a hot-air balloon!

Lancaster stone

When attending an Association for Science Education meeting at Lancaster recently, my wife noticed a large stone on the campus and went to the library to find out about it for me. She found this information, entitled "An explanation of the boulder placed at the corner of Alexander Square closest to University House", by the late Professor Andrews:

"The site at Bailrigg, as is obvious whenever we excavate, is notable for the large number of boulders in the clay, ranging in size and substance and frequently interesting in shape. In the Michaelmas term 1967, excavations for the Library extension exposed a large pinkish-grey boulder, apparently some sort of sandstone conglomeration. This is an amateur description; no geological examination has been made. Indeed, it was the shape and size of the boulder, rather than its interest as a geological specimen, that attracted attention. Ovoid, measuring approximately 60" at its widest circumference, and 30" in length, the boulder is thought to be sufficiently attractive in form to be preserved as a piece of tectonic sculpture".

Doris did not have time to investigate any leys that may pass through it, but it interested me as a possible case of subconscious siting, or re-siting.

Could do better...

from Paul Devereux: "Re your 'visible ley' - if you read LINES ON THE LANDSCAPE you'll see we have fully dealt with lines visible from the air...including the track I've discovered next to Kollright...prehistoric. There are indeed Nazca-style markings on the British landscape. Read LINES!" (Did you get a review copy?) Re gravity lines - you can get Bouguer Gravity Anomaly maps from the British Geological Survey in Notts, but we've already studied them on the Dragon Project and the info isn't really refined enough for our purposes. But remember that Mercator picked up gravity anomalies amongst the Carnac stone rows. Re markings on the land - read Watkins in OST on his Sutton Walls ley...that was revealed in ploughing".

(Sorry, sir...though your book was reviewed in Touchstone and Amskaya).

London meetings

London Earth Mysteries Circle will be holding the following meetings at the Maria Assumpta Centre, Kensington:
Feb. 13 - Sacred Geometry in Theosophist Literature, by Alan Hughes. Feb. 27 - Social Evening. March 13 - Gods and Goddesses of the Earth, by Steve Wilson. March 27 - Natural Magic and the Paranormal, by Allen Hunt. April 10 - Electrocrysal Therapy, by Harry Oldfield.

Sorry, some interesting letters received have had to be left till next issue, due to lack of space.

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