

# Touchstone

Surrey  
Earth  
Mysteries



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No. 2c  
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July 1990  
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## EARTH MYSTERIES AND ECOLOGY FIELD TRIP, 28TH APRIL 1990.

This trip, organised by Chris Hall, began at the Fleet service station on the M3, when members of the London Earth Mysteries Circle and the Surrey Earth Mysteries Group met there.

Chris first took us to Butter Wood, on the boundary between Odiham and Nately Scures parishes. Before we entered the wood he spoke to us about the strong links between earth mysteries ideas and the need to conserve the landscape. We would concentrate on ancient woodlands, he said, and this is the time to see them at their best. He had been born and brought up in the area (his family have been here at least 200 years) and he has walked it in all weathers, all seasons and all moods.

Butter Wood was ancient common land from Saxon times and was mentioned in the perambulation of 1562. Finally, before we entered the wood, he showed us two pictures of land before and after it had been damaged by over-use.

The two objects of interest in this wood were a Saxon boundary stone and a huge hollow oak. We then boarded the minibus again to go to another wood, a particularly ancient one with about 25 species of trees and shrubs and 100 species of flowers. It had been earmarked for house building, but the scheme had been quashed as it had been claimed that it was a remnant of prehistoric woodland. Yellow archangels, bluebells and woodland anemones were three of the flowers Chris identified for us. We then came to a wild service tree - a very rare species characteristic of ancient woodlands.



section of it between Houndhouse Road and Lawbrook Lane, and a little further to find the point where, in 1966, Philip Heselton had seen something strange. Shortly after meeting the Hurt Wood Ranger they both saw a strange object apparently on spindly legs standing on the ridge. The ranger went on to investigate, but Philip did not, having not much interest in UFOs at the time. We went to the spot from where it had been seen and Rob Stephenson and I climbed to the ridge along a narrow stretch of the Hurtwood Track going right over the hilltop, crowned with a beautiful and large Scots pine clump. The differences in widths on the different stretches were made clear on the part of the track we walked.

The weather brightened as we drove from here to Holmbury Hill, an Iron Age hillfort nearby, just off the line of the ley, though it skirts its lower slopes. We had our lunch at this striking and powerful place, with the wind roaring through the trees, on a seat round a cairn raised in memory of two people who had loved the Hurtwood.

We descended from here to the pretty little village of Holmbury St. Mary, with its Victorian but nonetheless attractive church on the side of a hill bearing another large clump. The ley goes through the clump (but not the church - but nevertheless the north aisle, raised to fit a vestry underneath, felt powerful). Going from here to the staggered junction the ley passes through, we were pleased to find a well, and the line seemed to pass through it to another clump visible in the distance. A dowser present seemed to find the line going a little to one side of the well, but our maps were not of large enough scale to determine which was correct. Whichever was the case, the two clumps were joined by the line - a discovery made on the trip.

After a pleasant chat over coffee at the local pub, we continued to our next destination - the church at Leigh, also on the Hurtwood Track ley. The name sounds significant, and the church (although it does not appear so at first sight) is at the junction of several straight tracks. This church is most powerful at the east end; it is fifteenth century with an attractive and unusual porch. We walked along one of the tracks - strikingly straight with a very Watkinsian view of the church along it - to the end where, although it is a public footpath, it just seemed to finish at a hedge. Along its line, however, we could see an unusual white scar on the hillside in the distance.

There is no track marking the way of the Hurtwood Track ley here, and the lines of the converging tracks are not very spectacular mapwise, though they do have a number of significant indications, like several other straight track multijunctions, prominent cross-roads, ponds etc. One of them also aligns with Dorking parish church.

Our last stop was at a junction of tracks near Dorking where the ley passes through; we met the owner of the land who said there was an older track leading into the junction, though it is the modern footpath which, strangely, seems to be in line with the ley.

It was a good field trip, with a number of new discoveries made which seem to verify the reality of the Hurtwood Track.

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## ST. ANNE'S HILL

by Chris Hall

John Aubrey's description of St. Anne's Hill near Chertsey is quoted in Touchstone 24. Aubrey knew the hill 300 years ago, and described its magnificent views over seven counties. In his day there was only woodland on the lower slopes, a coppice called Monk's Grove; the summit was treeless and my hunch is that it would have been sandy heathland.



Donald Maxwell, from Unknown Surrey, first published in 1924.

Since writing the article about John Aubrey's Surrey, some more information has come to light, and I have visited the hill with a friend who once lived nearby. An earlier name for the hill was "Eldebury", a Saxon word meaning "the old camp" or "fortification", suggesting the earthworks on the hill were old even to the Saxons. Had the name survived, it would probably have become "Albury", a place name identical in meaning to the name occurring elsewhere in Surrey.

The modern name is derived from the dedication of a medieval chapel built on it, though only a low ruined wall apparently remains of this. We could not locate it. That the hill was at least visited in ancient times is proven by the find of a Bronze Age spearhead, now in Chertsey Museum.

The hill overlooks the low country of the Thames flood plain, an area which was extensively settled in prehistory. Heathrow, Staines and the surrounding areas have a complex archaeological record, and both St. Anne's Hill and St. George's Hill have earthworks, thought to be of Iron Age date. Both are in a scatter of hills which constitute the first high country south of the Thames. The eye is naturally drawn to them, as the prehistoric eye would have been, and the escarpment of St. Anne's Hill is prominent from the Staines area. Travelling to it from the south I experienced just the opposite; it merges with the land, and is not really noticed until one is only a mile or so away. Surrey towards Chobham is more hilly and this is just another small undulation. However, the Chobham area seems to have been much more sparsely settled; it is the view from the north one imagines would have been observed the most.

In the 1908 publication "Highways and Byways of Surrey" there is a lengthy account of St. Anne's Hill. After quoting Aubrey, the writer describes a much changed place, "thickly planted with trees, conifers for the most part, and the view can only be had in peeps and patches". However, Crystal Palace, the dome of St. Paul's and the spire of Harrow church in North London could all be seen on a clear

day.

It is not so today, though a single view point is kept clear, providing a vista over Thorpe Park and Staines (!) The skyline is of wooded hills, which map study suggests must be in the Watford area some 18 miles to the north. Otherwise, much of the hill is very closed in, dark and scullless. We found it an unwelcoming place now. My feeling was of a very artificial and contrived landscape, where everything natural is persecuted. It was not a place either of us wished to linger in, so we completely forgot to seek out the stone pillar Aubrey had called the Devil's Stone.

"Highways and Byways" refers to this as the Devil's Stone, or Treasure Stone. The belief that treasure was hidden beneath it seems to have been widely held by the Victorians, and there were apparently a number of attempts to recover this legendary wealth. One dug a pit ten feet deep before giving up, still not having reached the base of the rock. As our Edwardian commentator wryly observes, "What is pretty certain is that he was trying to dig up St. Anne's Hill". He adds, "All over the face of the hill are masses of this hard, pebbly sandstone, though not so noticeable because they are flat".

The well may still be visited. Ordnance Survey mark it as "Nun's Well", on the west side of the hill. "Highways and Byways" has this "welling up under an arch", but its flow was slight in the dry season of our visit, and the stonework has part collapsed. Nor was its water particularly clear, but last century the country people took its water as an eye lotion, possibly with the belief that clear water provides clear vision.

Aubrey records another well in his day, in Monks Grove on the east side of St. Anne's Hill. He was not describing the same well, as I erroneously stated in the previous article. However, it is not referred to in the 1908 account, so it is presumably lost.

In "Highways and Byways" there is one other detail of possible earth mysteries interest: "Before the pines were planted, there stood on the hill three sister elms. One alone remains, fenced in with iron, and hollow, and still a splendid tree". The pine plantings began about 1860, but the elms must have been old even then. An English elm is mature at about 150, but can live 500, though it is unlikely to do well on a sandy soil on an exposed hill, and I suspect these would not have attained such a great age.

Planting of elms became popular for landscaping in the mid-17th century onwards, and probably the St. Anne's Hill elms were a part of that fashion. The reference to them as "sisters" is interesting; it occurs also in the London district of Seven Sisters, named from a group of seven elms which formerly grew near Page Green (first shown on Rocque's map dated 1754). There is still elm in the hedges on the lower slopes of the hill.

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#### MAY 22ND - LONDON EARTH MYSTERIES CIRCLE MEETING - HYPNOTIC REGRESSION AND PAST LIVES - PAUL BEW

Paul Bew is conducting an ongoing project into hypnotic regression and past lives under the auspices of the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena. A number of findings have come to light, one being that spontaneous attempts at regression are usually more successful than those run on a rigorous scientific basis. There was a case in which the same scene was described from different viewpoints in two different hypnotic sessions - the sacking of a monastery. One was from an outside observer, the other from a monk in the house. Often things not known are more significant than things known.

Subjects do not always take on the personality of the life sought - sometimes they talk to the character, or even speak as if reading from a book. Sometimes images brought through are seemingly embroidered, and some information given is contradicted in subsequent sessions. Sometimes, when the subject does take on the personality, he incorporates the hypnotist into the scene. In one case the hypnotist was asked "Are you a spirit?" The past life individual can "disappear" if the hypnotist says something out of character for the time.

Only one subject in forty gives distinct reincarnation-type lives, (which fits with my theory that in trying to comply with the hypnotist's wishes the person tries to reach past lives, but will only do so if psychically able - otherwise he will search his subconscious - just as a computer will first search the floppy disc drive for its operating system, then if it fails will look for a hard disc. Thus the practice is made very difficult).

One of the most significant things to come out of the project was an astrological study in the one case where dates of birth were forthcoming. These startlingly fitted the apparent natures of the individuals described, and there also seemed to be an astrological thread running through all the lives.

In one case the group faked a newspaper confirmation of the life brought through, with minor changes, but this did not make the subject change his story under hypnosis. No genuine documentary evidence for any of the lives has been found, however - for the distant ones this would not be expected though. In judging authenticity, things are made more difficult by the fact that for distant lives there can be not much chance of confirmation, while details of more recent scenes could have been subconsciously remembered from a book or other source in this life.

Paul feels that the conscious mind can often not cope with the information coming through, and thinks information from dreams might give better information than that from hypnotic sessions.

## LETTERS

From Chris Hall, Fleet:

The name Wishmoor, for the valley which forms the Surrey/Berkshire boundary between Camberley and Sandhurst, has a more mundane explanation than that hoped for by Mary Bonney. Place names are a mine field for the incautious: modern spellings are often fanciful or corrupted forms of Old English, and "wish" has nothing to do with the granting of wishes.

If we take the 1607 spelling we might deduce the place was a meeting for elders or wise men, for at that time it was Wisemore. In 1446 it was Weschmorestone, a reference to an old boundary stone which we visited on the 1988 field trip, thought also to have marked the safe crossing of a very marshy valley. A century earlier it is recorded as Wesshemordene. (This is interesting as it is a "stone" name obviously referring to an existing stone, which was earlier "dene". Does this indicate that the name Addlestone could also have referred to a stone, as theorised in an earlier Touchstone? - J.G.)

The first element is the Old English word wisce, which meant marshland, swamp. This is precisely what the valley would have been: it is much dried out now, as indicated by the Wishmore Stone, which today lies in dry woodland. In those days before land drainage was widespread this valley would have been treacherous bog, quite possibly of the "quaking" variety in which the "ground" of moss hummocks is actually afloat. Such a landscape only survives in Surrey today in one place, Thursley Common. The same word has given us Wisley, probably a reference there to riverside marshes, and Wisborough Green in Sussex.

However, the area of Wishmoor, Old Dean Common and Finchampstead Ridges is rich in folklore, not least legends of Herne the Hunter, who did indeed ride with the spectral wish-hounds in some versions of the tale. The problem is knowing the original stories from more recent embellishments; the name Wishmoor may have suggested wish-hounds to add some drama to the story. These tales do grow with the telling, and I have not been able to trace any pre-Victorian account of wish-hound legends here. The Victorians were notorious for fanciful additions to popular legends.

There are several accounts of these and other legends of the area in booklets such as The History of Camberley and The Crow and the Thorn, a history of Crowthorne; to repeat it all here would run to several pages.

As for Silverweed, it has a variety of country names, mostly referring to the colour of its leaves, but also from its roots, which were eaten in Ireland and Scotland as a poor man's food. Among some southern names are Golden Sovereigns (Somerset, from the flowers), Silver Fern (Somerset), Silver Feather (Oxfordshire), Fern Buttercup (Wiltshire) and Goosegrass (various counties). "Midsummer Silver" is only recorded for Surrey.

## NOTES AND NEWS

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#### Earth Pulse

The first edition of this newsletter contains a number of particularly interesting articles. There is one on crystals and gems in healing, which is concerned with the making of healing elixirs by pouring boiling water on to gemstones. Presumably the water picks up energies from the stones as in homeopathy and Eeman's circuits. Another article which is interesting in connection with the report of the talk on hypnotic regression in this issue, is "They See when Hypnotised". This is concerned with putting subjects into hypnotic trance at historic sites, after which they can allegedly describe things which happened in the past there. This is obviously something which could complicate past life research, if it is possible to pick up information from other sources than past lives when under hypnosis.

#### London Journal and meetings

The second issue of the London Earth Mysteries Circle Journal has recently appeared - with many excellent articles on such subjects as the Jelling Stone in Regents Park, holy wells, quartz, the Cornwall field trip and Rosicrucianism in Britain. Available at £1.75 from Rob Stephenson, 3, Bucknalls Drive, Brickett Wood, Hertfordshire, AL2 3XJ.

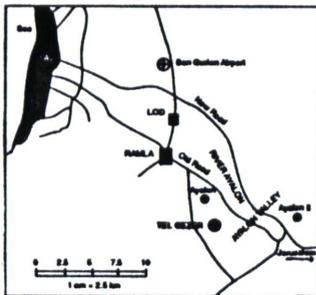
Meetings of LEMC at Maria Assumpta Centre, Kensington, are: Sept. 11th, Chesca Potter on Legendary London; Sept. 25th, Dr. Simon Dein on witch doctor healing in Madagascar (with video of this); Oct. 9th, Social Evening; Oct. 23rd, John Glover on E.M. research; Nov. 13th, Joan Andrews on mystical experiences; Nov. 27th, Hilary Evans on balls of light; Dec. 11th, Art Evening. Informal meetings of Surrey Earth Mysteries Group are held on the second Thursday of each month at 25, Albert Road Addlestone, Surrey (except August and December).

### The mysterious monoliths of Tel Gezer.

There was an interesting article in the current "Chalice Well Newsletter", published by the Chalice Well Trust in Glastonbury. It was written by Gordon Strachan, administrator of the Church of Scotland's "Sea of Galilee Centre" near Jerusalem, and concerns some standing stones in Israel.

He had been sitting at the Garden Tomb, Jerusalem, a place associated with Joseph of Arimathea, and thinking of the Chalice Well garden, with similar associations, and had asked a colleague where Arimathea was. He was told it was likely to have been at Ramla, near Tel Aviv. Shortly afterwards he met an archaeologist and happened to ask if there were any standing stones in Israel, and was surprised to hear that there are - at Tel Gezer, near Ramla. As it was the second time he had heard the name that week, he decided to visit the site.

He found the stones on a windy ridge near Tel Aviv, standing in a straight line in a slight hollow. Three were about twelve feet high, three about eight feet and the rest smaller. There was also a square block like an altar in the middle.



Having a picnic at the stones, he looked at his map, and noticed that the nearest village was called Ayalon; there was a River Ayalon nearby as well as a Valley of Ayalon. He was struck by the similarity of the word to Avalon and wondered if there might be a connection with Glastonbury, especially in view of the Joseph of Arimathea connection. The church at Ramla was indeed dedicated to Joseph but the monk in charge did not know why, except that an ancient tradition linked him with the town.

### Ritual sites in Thames Valley

Rob Stephenson recently sent me an extract from a magazine he recently received telling of a group of ritual sites covering an area embracing Egham, Chertsey, Walton-on-Thames and Heathrow Airport. These apparently include earthworks, an avenue of pits and even a

curtus. I had not heard of this discovery before - can anyone give me any details as to the locations of these sites?

### Fyrford perambulations

In the current issue of The Resident, of the Byfleet, West Byfleet and Fyrford Residents' Association (kindly brought to my attention by Daniele Hart), Howard Cook, President of the Association, has written an article about the local area. He mentions the enigmatic Fyrford Stone, moved from its position in the middle of a junction to a new site in the gateway of Fyrford Place. But he also describes a legend attached to it of "getting up and moving around at midnight". I had not heard of the legend before, but it suggests that the stone might indeed be very ancient.

### A sad sight - and a modern circle!

I was recently sent by my employers to video a group of mentally handicapped children at Hindleap Warren Activity Centre, Sussex. During the week I was pleased that we went on a walk which included Gills Lap, a striking clump of Scots pines mentioned by Tony Wedd. But I was sad to see that the hurricanes of recent years had severely damaged the clump, so much so that it is barely recognisable as one now. When inside the clump there still seem to be many pines standing - but the tops of most have been broken off and so it is much less prominent as a landmark.

I was interested to see nearby, however, what seemed to be a small modern stone circle! It seems to be to commemorate A.A. Milne, the creator of Winnie the Pooh. The largest stone has a plaque, but if this were the only intention the other smaller stones seemingly forming a very flattened ellipse would not have been necessary.

Also, interestingly, there seems to be an alignment between Friends' Clump to the south, through Gills Lap to the clump on the Witham road also mentioned by Tony Wedd. The stone circle is either on or very close to this line. Is it subconscious or known siting?

### The Fascination of Brittany

This book, written in 1911, and recently lent to me by Daniele Hart (herself from Brittany), shows how the stubborn persistence of the Breton people to maintain their ancient traditions has preserved a number of things from very ancient times. The standing stones are still regarded with reverence - the church was unable to stop this, but only to Christianise the stones as has been done elsewhere. The stones are sometimes anointed with wax, and offerings are left by them. But the legends here, although similar to those occurring in Britain, seem to have taken a more horrific turn, such as that of the little black men who inhabit the stones who make you dance till you die of fatigue, or the stones going to the water to drink which mesmerise people and crush them in their onward march. There are also tales of soldiers turned to stone, as there are here.

The summer solstice, thinly veiled as the feast of John the Baptist, is celebrated as the "Pardon of Fire". A great fire is lit and a rope joins it to the top of the church tower, and the legend is

"That is the way the dragon comes". This certainly seems like a memory of a ley joining beacons and other sites. The "Dragon" is a rocket which travels along the rope. As it lights the fire the people shout "an tan!" and fires are lit on the hills all around.

There are many lesser "pardons" which seem like a mixture of a religious ceremony and a fair, and there are processions often to roadside "Calvaries". Villages have their own particular ceremonies, such as passing children over a fire, bringing the sick to a fire or bathing the face in a sacred fountain.

## Chalk horse could be the last of a long line

By David Keys

MUCH OF WHAT is accepted about Britain's most famous chalk hill figure, the White Horse of Uffington, is being questioned by archaeological research.

Conventional wisdom has it that the White Horse was carved into the living chalk as an Old-Saxon tribute by King Aethelstan almost 1,000 years ago, and preserved ever since. But excavations being carried out by David Miles and Simon Professor of the Oxford Archaeological Unit have revealed that there is at least one earlier White Horse buried beneath the one we see today, and maybe as many as three or four. The horse may have changed shape through the centuries as successive layers were covered up.

In addition, rather than being carved into the hill by cutting through the covering layer of soil, each of the horses has been



The White Horse of Uffington, which appears to be made of chalk rubble in trenches

laboriously created by digging trenches into the hillside and packing them with chalk rubble brought to the site.

Many archaeologists suspect that the Uffington White Horse was originally built around the first century BC in some sort of great ceremonial context associated with a prehistoric Celtic festival, the summer festival of which still survives two hundred years in the south, although some experts have suggested that the horse may date from Anglo-Saxon times.

The current excavations should help to define the precise of the horse's origin. Scientific tests on the soil underlying the surface have already shed the date of the original construction.

The impetus to excavate evidence of the horse came from the recent discovery by local archaeologists of photographs of a previously unknown stone monument of the site which was apparently carried out in 1940 by the late Professor William Cunnington. The photographs registered for the first

time that there might be a series of White Horses on the Uffington hillside. England is the only country in Europe to have chalk hill figures. Besides the White Horse of Uffington, there are two other surviving chalk figures of medieval origin - the 12th Century Alden Chert in Dorset and the 13th Century Stone of Wharfedale in West Yorkshire. A fourth - the Wharfedale White Horse in West Yorkshire - may be the most-ruined but is an unusual upright equine figure.

However, at least four other hill figures of various ages existed in England, but were abandoned or destroyed to prevent confusion. A plan and the complete original horse were carved into a hillside at Westbury, Wiltshire, and two other figures around chalk sites elsewhere a hillside at Poynton Hill, Dorset, while on a hill near Stone, Shropshire, an even more remarkable red rock equine of a 19th century horse. Four of these hill figures are near the site of fortified Iron-Age hill-forts.

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