

## SECRETS OF THE DOWNS – THE CHICHESTER SOCIETY FESTIVAL WALK 2015

### St Mary's Church, North Marden

The church was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, as indicated by the finishing of the Caen stone in the doorway. There is no 'lost village', despite its remote location, but the church served as a chapel-of-ease connected to East Marden. The restoration in 1886 fitted a new roof and replaced the original belfry, but otherwise the church is essentially unchanged.

The semi-circular apse (i.e. the east end around the altar) is unusual but unique in Sussex in that there is no arch separating it from the rest of the church. The font is probably a 12<sup>th</sup> century original, though on a 14<sup>th</sup> century support.



### Irongates Arch

This is a former entrance to the Uppark estate. The House at Uppark was built in 1690 but bought by Sir Matthew Featherstonehaugh in 1747. His son, Sir Harry, commissioned the landscape architect, Humphrey Repton, to remodel parts of the park, of which the pillared portico and dairy are still standing. Repton's 'Red Book' in which he sketched his designs, included a 'Serpentine Drive' to show off the views, finishing at this gateway. It appears on early O.S. maps, but was no longer visible by 1988.

### The Vandalian Tower

This was built on the site of a former folly. Its name derives from the colony of Vandalia on the Ohio river, in which Sir Harry Featherstonehaugh invested (and lost!) a great deal of money in about 1790, in the peace following the American War of Independence. The 'Vandal' of the title was Queen Charlotte, who could trace descent from 8<sup>th</sup> century Vandal tribes in Spain. Vandalia attempted to become a separate state, but was squeezed out by Pennsylvania and West Virginia who each claimed part of its territory. The tower, designed as viewing house, was destroyed by fire in 1842, and the ruins were stabilised in 1982.



## Harting Downs

A excellent viewpoint for the Weald. Imagine, if you will, a great bubble of chalk pushed up some 75 million years ago by the same earth movements that created the Alps, as Africa crashed into Europe. The top of this bubble was more susceptible to erosion and it wore down to



give the ring of chalk hills, the North and South Downs, encircling the Weald. In turn this exposed an inner bubble of Greensand, now also eroded to enclose the Low Weald between Woolbeding Hill and Blackdown, Bexleyhill and Leith Hill, and so on – and in that yet another bubble, represented by Ashdown Forest. (A subsidiary bubble is responsible for the upper Lavant valley)

## Beacon Hill

The site of an Armada beacon and of one of the chain of Telegraph stations which linked Portsmouth to London in the Napoleonic Wars and for a while after. The original telegraph had a frame with six rotating shutters, each 5 feet square, and different patterns of open/closed signified letters of the alphabet and/or short messages. Later a semaphore system looking like railway signals was installed. Messages took only a few minutes to reach London from Portsmouth.

The nearest stations to here were Telegraph Hill at Woolbeding and Chalton Down. There is a restored telegraph open to the public at Chatley Heath near Wisley.

## Telegraph House – Beacon Hill School

This school was opened in 1927 by Sir Bertrand Russell and his wife Dora, in premises owned by Bertrand's brother, and operated on a philosophy that children were naturally curious, and would learn whatever they needed of their own free will and at their own rate. Initially there were 12 pupils up to 8 years old. The prospectus included the statement *“That no knowledge of any sort or kind should be withheld from children and young people; Respect for the individual preferences and peculiarities of the child, both in work and in behaviour; Morality and reasoning to arise from the children's actual experience in a democratic group and never of necessity from the authority or convenience of adults. The school was co-educational and under the heading “sex and anatomical teaching” the Principals promised “complete frankness on*



*anatomical and physiological facts of sex, marriage, parenthood and the bodily functions". Formal teaching was available, but much of it, especially for the younger children, involved blocks, clay, paint and "Montessori things". No child was to be forced to go to lessons, but for those seven years and older "certain work is set per week" and the child was expected to "make an effort to complete his week's work".*

After the Russells' divorce in 1935, Dora continued to run the school elsewhere but Sir Bertrand Russell had changed his ideas : "In retrospect, I feel that several things were mistaken in the principles upon which the school was conducted. Young children in a group cannot be happy without a certain amount of order and routine. Left to amuse themselves, they are bored and turn to bullying or destruction"; though his daughter Katherine recalls the "200 acres of woods and valleys, with deer and rabbits and stoats and weasels and huge yew trees we could jump into from higher trees and absolutely magnificent beech trees for climbing — it was incomparable."

The Russells were apparently often to be seen at the then pub in East Marden – or maybe it was

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### **The Royal Oak, Hooksway**

This pub dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, reputedly on the site of a lost village. Its most celebrated landlord was Alfred Ainger, whose father (also Alfred) took over the licence in 1903. 'Young Alf' originally milked cows at Treyford, but in 1907, shortly after his marriage to Carrie Cribb, he took over as landlord and stayed until he died 'in harness' in 1970 at the age of 89. Times were hard, and Alf had part-time jobs in farming, as carter and woodsman, supplying faggots by horse and cart as far afield as West Wittering – an 11 hour day broken only by a stop at 'The Wellington' on Broyle Road.

The lower bar on the north side used to be the only bar, lit only by candles and paraffin lamps. Facilities were primitive, and the story has it that when questioned by Midhurst magistrates as to his toilet arrangements, Alf replied "I got nine acres, zur!"

King Edward VII and other royalty staying at West Dean used to walk over from there for refreshment, taking potshots as they went – the area is still marketed as The King's Walk. John, the son of Bertrand Russell came to recuperate after his health gave way as a 'Bevan Boy' drafted down the coalmines in WWII. And young doctors from Chichester gathered here to let their hair down, confident that they wouldn't be known in the neighbourhood!

