

SECRETS OF THE DOWNS – THE CHICHESTER SOCIETY FESTIVAL WALK 2016

St Mary's, Stoughton

A fine and very early (11th C) church, almost certainly the church mentioned in Domesday Book. There were later alterations to the nave around 1200, some windows were added in 1300 and the doorways and roof are also of later date. However the massive quoins (cornerstones) are certainly original, as is the typical 11C herringbone masonry in the lower part of the tower, recently exposed when a coat of render was removed. On the north side there is some re-used Roman brick. The design of the chancel arch resembles that at Bosham – there may be a link as both manors were held by Earl Godwin. The font dates from the 12C with tree-of-life decoration.



There is a ring of six bells, the last being added in 2007, being funded by the ringers. The organ is a restored 19C Willis organ, added in 1994. The Millennium community project of a 12-panel tapestry illustrates the life of the village from Roman times to the present day..

<https://westbournedeanery.wordpress.com/2013/07/11/stoughton-st-mary-textiles-and-history/>

Its starting motto '*He sendeth the springs into the valleys which run among the hills*' refers to the winterbourne which rises in the village in wet winters and feeds the river Ems.



The Monarch's Way

In 1651, Charles II invaded England from his power base in Scotland. Few English royalists joined him, and he was defeated at the Battle of Worcester on 3rd September 1651. He escaped the immediate search by hiding in an oak tree at Boscobel House near Wolverhampton, hence the common pub name of the Royal Oak. From there he made his way across country, often disguised as a woodman or as a servant, until taking ship for France from Shoreham-by-Sea.

The Monarch's Way is a 615-mile route approximating the route of Charles' flight from Worcester via Boscobel to Shoreham, but avoiding today's main roads. The route takes in Stratford-on-Avon, Cirencester, Bristol and then down to the Dorset coast at Charmouth, before backtracking to Yeovil and thence across Cranborne Chase to the South Downs. The waymark is yellow and shows a picture of the ship *Surprise*, on which he finally sailed, above the Prince of Wales three-point feathered crown which is superimposed on the Royal Oak tree in black.

In Sussex, Charles' movements were guided by Colonel Gunter (or Gounter) of Racton. On 12th October, Charles' party stayed at Hambledon, where Col. Gunter's sister lived. From there they rode the 50 miles to Brighton (then Brighthelmstone) in one day, passing through Racton. They stopped at the George and Dragon in Houghton for lunch, and then via Bramber where they brazened it out, riding boldly through a troop of 50 soldiers who were looking for Charles!

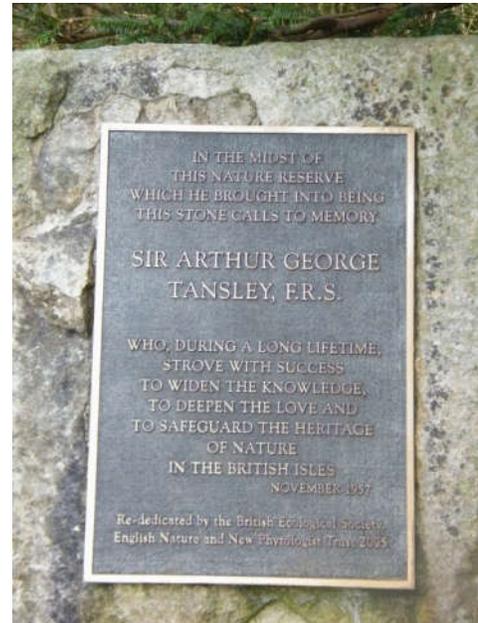
Col Gunter had made arrangements for Charles to be picked up at Shoreham on the *Surprise*, a boat trading to France, using the contacts of a French merchant, Francis Mansell, who lived in Chichester. Charles, escorted by Lord Wilmot, Col. Gunter and M. Mansell, stayed at the George in West Street, Brighton on 14th October, where they met the captain of the *Surprise*, Nicholas Tattershall. Tattershall recognised the king, saw through the cover story that he was an illegal duellist escaping justice, and demanded £200 danger money in addition to the £60 already agreed.

Charles' party rode to Shoreham early on 15th October, boarded the *Surprise* and sailed with the high tide at 7am that morning – just in time, as a troop of cavalry arrived only two hours later with orders to arrest Charles.

The Tansley Stone

Sir Arthur Tansley (1871 – 1955) was an English botanist and a pioneer in the science of ecology, who helped to set up the Kingley Vale Nature Reserve. He is credited with the introduction of the concept of the ecosystem. He was the founder of the *Journal of Ecology* and the first President of the Ecological Society. After lecturing at the Universities of London and then Cambridge, he became Professor of Botany at Oxford.

He used his contacts and influence to persuade the government to pass the Countryside Act in 1949, setting up the Nature Conservancy (now Natural England) with himself as its first Chairman. Under his leadership, the Conservancy made Kingley Vale one of its first purchases, in 1952, and so the National Nature Reserve was founded. The Reserve is noted for one of the finest yew forests in Europe; the yews are thought to have re-established themselves here after being cleared in Neolithic times. Most of Britain's mammals can be found here, with many less usual birds such as nightingale, hobby and kite – and 11 species of orchid!



Sir Arthur considered that the view across Kingley Vale was the finest in England. Appropriately his ashes are scattered near this spot. A memorial plaque to him is mounted on a sarsen stone taken from the Wiltshire Downs near Stonehenge.

Bow Hill is one of the places where wild juniper can still be found in the south, along with Levin Down and Noar Hill. It does not appear to be regenerating naturally. One theory is that juniper berries need bare ground to germinate, and with the decline of sheep grazing on the downs, bare earth is no longer being created along sheep tracks. Plots of cleared ground have been created and sown with juniper on the east side of Bow Hill to test the idea.

In the branches of some of the yew trees below the path between here and the King's Graves there are holes to be seen. If these are probed, there is iron underneath, being pieces of shrapnel from WWII, when this area was used for training by Canadian troops, before D-day.

The Kings' Graves (aka The Devil's Humps)

I prefer the name of the Kings' Graves, as it distinguishes these barrows (tumuli) from the Devil's Jumps near Hooksway, and has a folklore connection which says that a Viking war party was defeated here and the Viking leaders were buried on this spot. *When the host that had besieged Exeter sailed back on its way home, it harried inland in Sussex near Chichester, but the garrison put them to flight and slew many hundred of them, capturing some of their ships.* (G. N. Garmonsway (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 1953*, p.88). In fact the tumuli date from a couple of millennia before the Vikings!



There is a collection of four barrows from the Bronze Age. There are also traces of more barrows, difficult to make out today on the ground, but easily visible in LIDAR surveys being carried out by the South Downs National Park. The two southwestern barrows are bell barrows and the two northeastern ones are bowl barrows.

Bell barrows typically date from 1500-1100 BC, and usually take the form of a simple central mound surrounded by a berm (= platform) and then a ditch, whose material was used to form the mound. There are about 250 across Wessex. They frequently contain weapons, pottery and personal effects suggesting that they were the burial places of aristocratic men.

Bowl barrows were constructed over a longer period from 2500 BC onwards. They are similar to bell barrows, but do not have a berm, and are much more common than bell barrows. The mound may cover one or more graves which were burial places for both men and women. In Wessex culture, the body was laid out with the head to the north, men facing east and women facing west, with grave goods, typically pottery and jewellery.



Little was found when the Kings Graves were excavated by modern archaeologists, but there was evidence of earlier disturbance. They can be seen from the North Walls in Chichester, looking across the Brewery Field from the NW corner of the Walls. The height of the new houses on the Brewery Field was deliberately limited to preserve this view.

The Polish War Memorial, Stoughton

Boleslaw Własnowolski was born in Krakow in 1916. He was a pilot with the Polish Air Force in 1939, and shared in the 'kill' of a German Dornier there before escaping to England. He joined the RAF and flew Hurricanes with 607 squadron in the Battle of Britain, claiming another 4 'kills'.

After a transfer to 213 squadron at Tangmere, he was shot down in combat with a Messerschmidt 109 over Portsmouth on 1st November 1940, and crashed in the field by the memorial. He is buried in Chichester.

"He died defending Britain, Poland and Freedom"

