



THE HAMMER BOTTOM HIKE



SUPPORTING NOTES



1 INTRODUCTION

This document is merely a background to the places in and around our event. It is not designed to be taken with you on the day (there will be some Route Notes for that). It just attempts to provide some hopefully interesting insights into the places you will pass through and near.

My sources have been wide and varied. Inevitably the Internet, the National Trust, both on line and en route, Haslemere library (local history section) and the marvellous Museum in the High Street.

I hope you enjoy it; you should learn a lot. I did !! It's probably best to read it well before the event, to whet your appetite, encourage your money raising activities and galvanise your training regime. You can of course read it post-event to remind you of the day. However, I would not recommend using it on September 5th.

2. BLACKDOWN & THE NATIONAL TRUST - Mile 2

3. HASLEMERE's WELL – Mile 7

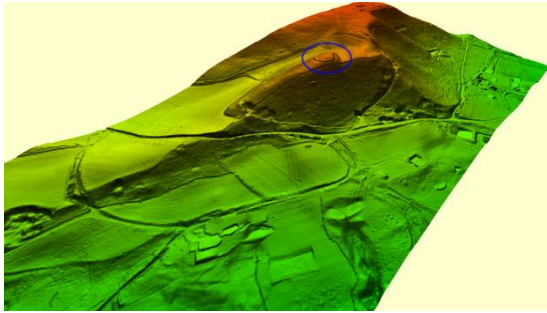
2 BLACKDOWN & THE NATIONAL TRUST - Mile 2

It is the highest point in the South Downs National Park and the highest spot in Sussex at 919 ft. It is the third highest piece of ground in South East England, surpassed only by Leith Hill in Surrey (965 ft) and Walbury Hill in Berkshire (974 ft).

One of Britain's rarest butterflies the silver-studded blue is making a come back at Blackdown, thanks to 12 years of restoration work in the area to help encourage a habitat to its liking. Its population in the UK has plummeted by over 70% since 1995.



I spoke earlier about people having lived in the area for many thousands of years. Some recent work using newish technology has sparked some renewed interest in our ancestors.



This technique known as "LIDAR", (Light Detection and Ranging), uses airborne laser scanning to produce a Digital Terrain Map of an area, with all the spurious "clutter" like trees, vegetation and buildings removed. Here is a map that someone prepared earlier and it's of Blackdown. Note blue ellipse please.

"We are particularly interested in some circular earthworks near the Temple of the Winds, which may indicate Bronze Age burial sites" said Tom Dommett, the National Trust's archaeologist when addressing a standing-room only audience in February 2014 at the Haslemere Museum.

Now, this is where I start to lose the plot. Study the image below



This is a drawing made in 1790 of Blackdown house looking back up towards Blackdown. Towards the top right of the sketch is a very obvious "structure". It's circular and although I am no expert in these matters, I would say it's "fortish" in appearance and pre-dates the house by many generations.

So, we must know that it is very close to the Temple of the Winds and using the house as a landmark, the "fortish" thing is facing South West. So we have basically known where it is for the last 224 years. I somehow think it is still there. I find it hard to believe it got bored with the view one day, upped sticks and left. I can't quite understand why we need airborne drones bombarding the countryside with lasers to "find" it.....again. Anyway next time I am up at Blackdown, me and a trowel are going to go and look for it. I'll report back.

If you can, cast your mind back to Bonfire Night in 1967; actually Saturday 4th November was when most people celebrated the event. If you can't, this is 4 years after Kennedy was assassinated; 18 months before Americans walked on the Moon and about 18 months after England won the Football World Cup. So a long, long time ago.

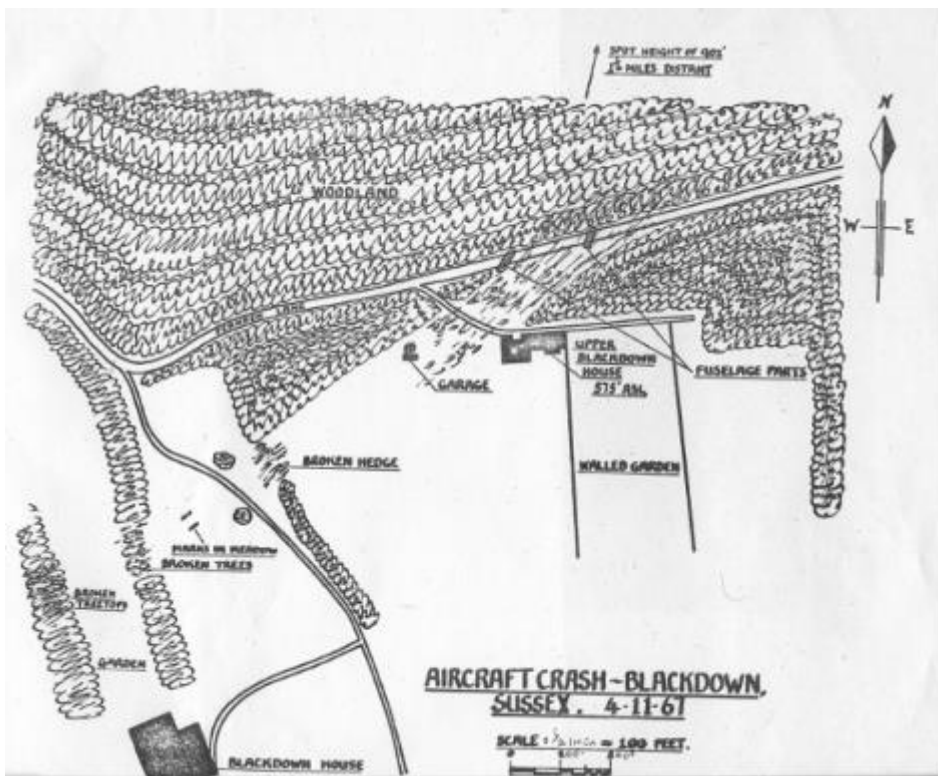
Brian Moore, the then landlord of the Prince of Wales in those days was collecting glasses from the car park just after 10 pm as revellers had been enjoying a free display(s) from local houses. He heard a very loud firework and told me many years later "Strewth, Andy. I thought at the time, that's a biggun". Tragically it wasn't a firework Brian heard but a commercial airliner crashing into Blackdown Hill, some 3 miles away. The police report from the time was as follows:

"About 10.02 p.m. on Saturday, 4th November, 1967, a Caravelle Airliner No. EC-BDD, owned by Iberia Airlines of Spain, crashed at Black Down Hill, Sussex (map reference 919289). This Hill at its highest point is 902 ft. above sea level. The aircraft was on a scheduled flight from Malaga, Spain, to Heathrow Airport, and was piloted by Captain Harnando Maura [Pieres], 37 years, an experienced Pilot. It left Malaga at 7.30 p.m. G.M.T. and the estimated time of arrival at Heathrow Airport was 10.10 p.m. G.M.T. The weather at the time was slightly misty with intermittent drizzle but there was reasonable visibility.

The plane, initially struck trees in the grounds of Black Down House, then continued for hundreds of yards, "passing across a meadow where it killed 65 grazing sheep and injured 23 more which were subsequently destroyed".

All 37 souls on board perished. The inevitable inquest and investigation discovered there was nothing wrong with the aircraft, the undercarriage was stowed and the engines were operating at normal power for the approach to Heathrow, scheduled for 8 minutes later. As

the police report notes it was slightly misty with reasonable visibility. The fact that no person on the ground was killed was a miracle. A garage was destroyed and the Pathe news reel of the time shows parts of the aircraft "draped" over the roof of Upper Blackdown House. Parts of the fuselage were on Fernden Lane, the same lane you walked on having crossed the Haslemere:Midhurst road earlier.



TENNYSON

(Related to Stephen Fry ?)



Following the death of Wordsworth, one Alfred Tennyson became the poet Laureate. He had visited the area in the mid 1860's and clearly liked the place. He already had a big country place in Farringford/Freshwater on the Isle of Wight, but tired of the invasion of his privacy. Letters in his memoirs reflect his Lordship's frustration perhaps:

"I am not flying from the cockneys here (IOW), to tumble in the cockneys there (Haslemere), I hope"

"My wife has always had a fancy for the sandy soil and heather-scented air of this part of England and we are intending to buy a few acres and build a little home here, whither we may escape when the cockneys are running over my lawns at Freshwater"

He did have strategies for dealing with his "visitors" on the Island, but they were clearly becoming very irksome. When they began coming up the drive his wife Emily would blow a whistle around her neck to warn him. If he were in his library he would run down the spiral staircase, out of the door and into the shrubbery and across the wooden bridge he had built, and onto the downs.

Having taken rooms at Grayshott Farm, the foundations for his house "Aldworth" in the lane named after him, were laid in 1868 and he appointed an architect he met at Haslemere Station. I note the "little home" was up for sale some 5 years ago for a cool £10 million.

NATIONAL TRUST

You may be wondering why the National Trust itself has anything to do with this document. And you may have wondered why so much of what you will be trampling on in this event is owned by and cared for by the National Trust, (approximately 3,500 acres in the local vicinity). Well there's probably one answer to both questions. Sir Robert Hunter.



He was both a local resident and one of the co-founders of the Trust which became a legal entity in 1895, but had been active for some time before. He came away from University with firsts in Logic and Moral Philosophy and started professional life as an articled clerk in Holborn. He got so bored he did a Masters Degree while continuing to work at the solicitors practice. In 1866, he won a prize for an essay on "Commons and the best means of preserving them for the public". The Commons Preservation Society made him their Honorary Solicitor shortly thereafter

Here he achieved many successes in saving common land from enclosure, most notably Epping Forest, which Queen Victoria declared open as a public park in 1882. In that same year, he was recommended for the position of Legal Adviser to the Post Office, where he stayed for the rest of his working life, though he still regularly assisted the Society in its work.

In 1883, he and his family moved to Three Gates Lane in Haslemere, where he joined the growing band of rail commuters employed in London. The following year, Octavia Hill enlisted his help in trying to save Sayes Court in Deptford. The owner wanted to give the property to the nation, but no organisation existed to accept the gift. Hunter felt a new 'Company' should be established for such purposes, and so began his idea of a 'National Trust.'

The idea lay dormant for nearly 10 years until 1893, when Hardwicke Rawnsley sought help to buy some land in the Lake District which was under threat from speculators. This time the seed grew, and in January 1895 the National Trust was founded, with Hunter as its first chairman and Hill and Rawnsley as the other founders. Hunter's legal brain told him there was more to do though; and in 1907 he got an Act passed in Parliament, which in effect meant that the National Trust had to hold its assets in perpetuity. Given current building pressures and all the fracking nonsense we have to put up with these days, what an insightful move that was 108 years ago.

Knighthood the previous year for his services to the Post Office, he also became chairman of the first Haslemere Parish Council, formed in the same month as the Trust. This diligent, quiet man retired from the Post Office at the end of July 1913, but by early November had died of septicaemia.

No Relation

You may well have noticed an inscription on the curved bench at the Temple of the Winds at Blackdown. It reads **"This seat was erected in memory of Mabel Elizabeth Hunter, wife of Edward W Hunter who gave Blackdown to the National Trust in 1944"**. Absolutely nothing to do with Sir Robert who had died some 31 years earlier. Our second Mr Hunter (a printing magnate) had heard the Cowdray Estate was planning to sell Blackdown to a developer who was going to build a cafe/restaurant on the Southerly viewpoint, with a nice metalled road to get you there. Outraged by such a desecration, he personally acquired the land for £1600 and promptly handed it over into the safe keeping of the Trust.

3 HASLEMERE's WELL – Mile 7

This is to be found right at the end of your little adventure today and somewhat intuitively in Well Lane. This dipping well was one of the two sources of water for the folk of Haslemere, from medieval times to the end of the 19th Century. Hannah Oakford was the Town's last public water carrier, charging a "penny ha'penny" per bucket for delivery, until her passing in 1898.

Surprisingly, the well is still in use today; well I saw a frog in it !