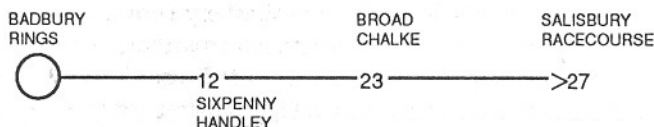


Locus Classicus

This is an engrossing historical walk using some of the finest stretches of Roman and ancient Drove roads in the area. Commencing at Badbury Rings you will follow the Roman road that was measured and laid by the town planners of the day using flags, poles and beacons as a help with construction. To vary this route so that it is not all "straight" your journey will take you through Sixpenny Handley and Broad Chalke. This is another two-car walk or a means of arranged transport at the end for the return journey back to the "Rings". Enjoy this Ideal Passage.



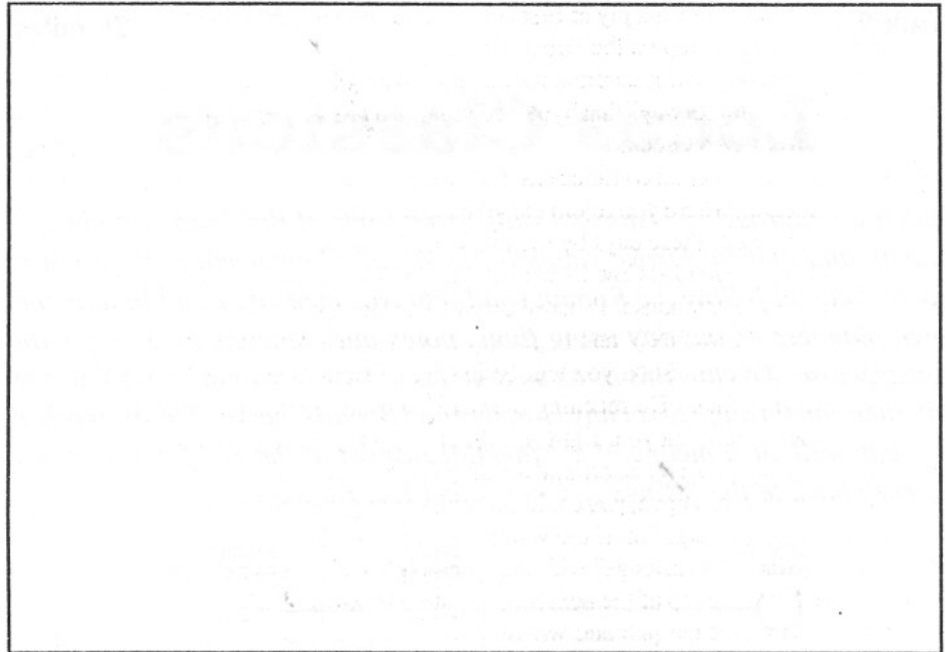
ON LEAVING the Kingston Lacy Estate parking area walk NW towards Badbury Rings through a heavily tree lined avenue, of which there was originally one tree planted to represent every day of the year — that was until the dreaded Dutch Elm Disease intervened. After approx. half-a-mile a broad track is reached on your first right at GR966023 and your day's epic journey has begun.

Leaving the Rings on your left, where they hold some fine Point-to-Point Races, keep walking straight ahead passing High Wood on your right and shortly afterwards another wood — The Oaks — is on your left opposite King Down Farm. Eventually you will join a section of public road where there is unfortunately approx. 800 yds. of road pounding to do. Carry on NNW over the crossroads until you reach a T-junction. Bear right here and take the track left — known as Rowbarrow Lane — and exit this track by the Old School House.

On reaching the road continue straight over, heading for a wood ahead known as The Rookery. The path heads straight through the middle, coming out onto another road. Continue NNW to cross a footbridge and after a few yards pick up the path again where the road bends away to the left. Follow this path still on a NNW bearing, crossing two more roads to join the Ackling Dyke Roman Road at GR993109. This is one of the finest examples of Roman Road still surviving. A two-mile stretch of this will bring you to a crossroads at Harley Down — known as Harley Gap — and it is here you will change course by turning left and heading west for Sixpenny Handley.

Following this track you will soon reach Gussage Down that has a heavy concentration of ancient tumuli and you will actually cross over the *Dorset Cursus* that lies amongst the long barrows, tracks and ditches of this very prehistoric site.

The Cursus is thought to have been a kind of ceremonial burial route to the long barrows



and attracts coachloads of amateur archaeologists that swarm all over the countryside looking for it — *beware!* On one occasion I did mention to three backmarkers from one such group that we would be passing right over it . . . but their attitude was a kind of “How do you know?”. So we left them. Incidentally it also means *Racecourse*

On reaching the road continue on over and on passing Chapel Down Farm take the next track right to join a lane that will take you into Sixpenny Handley — a village that had to be rebuilt after the great fire of 1892. This village gets its name from the Latin *Sexpena* and *Hanlege*. If you feel like some refreshment at this stage the village’s two pubs come high on my list of revisits. They are the Roebuck and Star and are positioned half down the village high street and at the bottom respectively. The choice is yours. The village master butcher sells the finest ham I’ve ever tasted in Dorset is worth a purchase for your weekend salad!

The next part of the walk is to map read your way to the Ox Drove. Leave Sixpenny Handley by retracing your steps to the church. Go through the Lychgate and take the path north from the rear of the church passing a camp site on your right. At the hole in the hedge turn left and after a few yards cross the next two fields diagonally on a well used path that originally would have been used by the villagers of Deneland to walk to and from the church for worship. Turn left on reaching the road and walk right through the village until you reach Shermal Gate where two woods converge and a long drive leads up to Chase Farm. The track that crosses your path here heading east to west is the ancient Shire Rack. You need to walk between the drive to Chase Farm and the Shire Rack path that disappears to your left into the woods on a NW bearing towards the Chase Woods, entering the wood at the corner. This is a pleasant incursion into King John’s hunting territory. Follow the path through until you see the two paths that will take you up onto the Ox Drove. Take the

path on the left and climb steeply at first before reaching the part-ruined former dairy of Bigley Buildings at the top on the Drove itself.

Change your bearing to due east and for the next five miles follow this ancient Drover's road, an early-day "motorway" that bypassed villages on its way to Salisbury that possibly had its origin from Win Green.

On reaching a road section continue east for a mile of "concrete bashing" until you reach the main T-junction, where you rejoin the green lane of the Ox Drove that sadly becomes deeply rutted in places these days by the introduction of the 4-wheel-drive vehicles.

When you reach the road at Cow Down Hill the Ox Drove continues NE before crossing the next road at Hut Farmhouse. Proceed on past The Hut and Lodge Farm and at the next "green crossroads" turn NNW and begin to descend into a delightful valley with some stunning head-on views. Soon you will be in Church Bottom heading for the Wiltshire village of Broad Chalke. On reaching the road carry straight on passing the imposing building of Manor Farm on your right and the church on your left. Continue on through the village crossing the River Ebbles and heading for the Queen's Head Inn that dates from the 15th century. Here, if open, you could exercise your right arm in the sheltered courtyard at the rear or in the Village Bar if the weather is anti-social.

Now on the "final few furlongs" with the finishing straight at the top of the next hill, continue on left round the pub and where the road takes a 90-degree left bend continue on up northwards on a tarmac track. This long and steady climb will take about 20 minutes to half-an-hour, then it's a right turn at the top, bearing right again (NE) where the path forks after approx. half-a-mile... then it's heads down with no more pit stops as you clock up the final four miles on the Old Shaftesbury Drove, which runs virtually parallel with its modern day successor — the A30.

The Shaftesbury Drove was the original coach and turnpike road between Shaftesbury and Salisbury. The Turnpike roads were a system of tolls managed by tollbars, tollfarmers and turnpikemen and were unpopular because the early-day Drovers, Packman and Carriers resented paying tolls for of the obvious reason at the end of the day it would reduce their profits.

The finishing tape is Salisbury Racecourse. Sadly no rosettes to be presented, but plenty to chat about during the de-briefing on the ride back to "The Rings".

FACT FILE

Distance — 26 miles

Time — Allow 9/10 hours

Maps

OS Pathfinder 1300

OS Pathfinder 1281

OS Pathfinder SU01/11

OS Pathfinder 1261

OS Pathfinder 1262

Start/Parking

Kingston Lacy - Grid Ref. 973021

Finish/Parking

Salisbury Racecourse - Grid Ref. 092285

Terrain

A long and easy walk using ancient Drove Roads and the Roman Road

Refreshments

The Star Inn, Sixpenny Handley

The Roebuck, Sixpenny Handley

The Queen's Head Inn, Broad Chalke

Pubs and Cafes at Salisbury

Toilets

Pubs at Sixpenny Handley

The Queens Head, Broad Chalke

Accommodation

King's Head Hotel,

Wimborne (01202) 880101

Youth Hostel at Salisbury

Hotels in Salisbury

Tourist Information

Salisbury (01722) 334956

Poole (01202) 673322