

ROUTE OF KING CHARLES II. THROUGH SUSSEX DURING HIS FLIGHT IN 1651.

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SHAKESPEARE and Sir Walter Scott cannot be recommended as guides in the study of history; and it is to be feared that many popular anachronisms may be traced to their writings. The book-makers of our own day too often mislead; and even the painstaking and accomplished author of that famous Sussex Novel, "Ovingdean Grange," is likely to perpetuate error in connection with an interesting incident in our local history—the Flight of King Charles the Second after the Battle of Worcester.

In this Paper an attempt is made to define more exactly than has yet been done, the route of the fugitive Monarch.

It is recorded in Vol. V. of our Sussex Arch. Collect., p. 48, that "Thomas and George Gunter, of Racton, met the King near Hambleton, in Hampshire, with a leash of greyhounds as if for coursing." This was on the evening of October 13th, 1651. The King passed the night, in the character of a Roundhead, at the house of "Thomas Symones," Gunter's brother-in-law.

They set out at break of day, crossing Broad-half-penny Down,¹ whence they would proceed over Catherington Down, Charlton Down, and Idsworth Down, in Hampshire, to Compton Down, in Sussex. The early morning scenery, the meeting in the central avenue of Stanstead Forest, and the melancholy ghost story, must be relinquished to the Novelist, because it is most improbable that the King would be conducted through bad roads swarming with armed men, when the party might with more ease and safety canter over the smooth turf of our glorious South Downs. Even then the

¹ NOTE (by M. A. L.) Broad-half-penny Down. I have been much puzzled at this strange piece of local nomenclature; but lately turning over the pages of Bailey's Dictionary (folio 1730), I

found *Brod-halfpeny* explained as "an exemption from paying a certain toll to the lord of the manour, &c. for setting up boards in a fair or market."

King would be within about two miles of Stanstead House, "where Captain Thomas Gunter prudently left him, in order to attract less notice upon the party." Gunter would have to ride about four miles to his home at Racton, from whence he is said to have proceeded to Brighton by the road through Arundel and Shoreham, arriving in time to arrange with Tattersel for the King's voyage to the Continent, "accompanying him in the voyage, and seeing him safe ashore." It is probable that some previous writers have confounded Captain Thomas with Colonel George Gunter in this particular.

Leaving the pretty villages of Compton and Up-Marden a little to the south, the King, Lord Wilmot, and George Gunter follow the track up Long Down, and across Marden Down to the Tumuli called the "Devil's Jumps," from whence they would have a splendid ride along the top of the Downs from west to east, with the broad valley of the Weald on their left, and the blue waters of the English Channel on their right, the horizon broken by Rook's Hill in the distance, and occasional plantations near at hand. This point is about twelve miles, as the crow flies, from Hambleton, and the time could hardly have been earlier than nine o'clock. Leaving Treyford, Didling, and Bepton at their feet on the left hand, with Midhurst and Petworth at some distance beyond, they skirt the northern edge of the great West Dean Woods, and passing over Cocking Warren, cross the main road from Midhurst to Chichester. Another half-hour brings them to Heyshott Down, with Heyshott and the Dunsford of the Cobdens at the bottom of the hill on their left. At ten miles distance Black Down grandly and gloomily closes the scene. For five long miles they have close on their right Singleton Forest, Charlton Forest, and the Tegleases. In the middle distance of the Weald may now be seen the brown and dreary commons of North Heath, Ambersham, and Graffham, with its ominous gibbet on "Galley Hill," and Duncton.

Here the Downs break off, and trend abruptly to the south-east. The travellers, leaving Duncton Beacon to the left, rapidly descend the hill, passing a solitary tumulus, whilst a flock of plump lapwings, resplendent with purple

and green, wheel circling about their heads, screaming their weird and monotonous cry of "peewit," and startling both horses and riders from their meditations. In the bottom, at Littleton, they cross the highway from Petworth to Chichester. Throwing the reins on the necks of their horses as they toil up the chalky and "hollow" way of the next ridge of hills, they think of dangers past and present, and of—dinner. A ride of five and twenty miles through the pure and exhilarating air of the open Downs would be enough to sharpen any capable appetite; and the Merry Monarch, doubtless, hereabouts, as the writer himself has done at the same place, exclaimed to his somewhat startled attendants, or *quasi* masters, "my belly crieth cupboard."

Plodding on, the horses have brought them again to the top of the Downs; and now, from Glatting Beacon, the King, pulling up his horse, follows with his eye the "Stane Street," or Roman Way, which, with its central ridge, two roads, and side ditches, runs up hill and down dale straight as an arrow from the bow, far as his eye can trace its course, in a direct line to the spire of Chichester Cathedral, which rises at a distance of ten miles out of the rich and lovely champaign country, backed by the Channel and the Isle of Wight, which hangs like a blue cloud in the south-west horizon. Turning his horse's head, he gazes over the Weald. At his feet are the villages of Bignor and Sutton, with their white-washed cottages, and busy water-mills. To the left is Burton Park, with its broad sheets of water and ancient mill. Again, the commons, covered with their brown heath and frost-struck ferns, of Horncroft, and most romantic Fittleworth. There, too, is the common of Watersfield, with its Roman Camp, and the still more venerable Lodge Hill of the Celt. Beyond rises the hill with its "holt," named Arundel after its noble owner; and, far away in the dim distance, is the long, grey, even line of the "Hog's back," marking the site of the town of Guildford. Looking a little more to the east, and following the northern line of the Roman Way through Pulborough and Billingshurst, among the silver windings of the Arun, the view is bounded by Leith Hill, rising, rugged and majestic, in the fair county of Surrey. The poor King for once feels himself ennobled, the magnifi-

cent panorama awakening in his heart some feelings akin to appreciation of the sublime; and, rising slightly in his stirrups, he exclaims, "*This is a country worth fighting for!*" Urged, however, by the anxieties of his followers, or rather leaders, he once more, and with a sigh, turns his horse's head to the south-east, and rapidly descending the hill past some ancient tumuli, where lay buried those who, in the old times, fought and lost the day, the party plunge into the shades of Houghton Forest.

Safely and unchallenged have they hitherto pursued their way, having seen no human being, save a shepherd here and there in the distance tending his flock. But for his pressing cares, the ever-recurring thought of his father's death, and regrets for his own lost crown, Charles would have considered this the pleasantest journey he ever took in his life. Other thoughts now occupy his breast, and the deep gloom of the beech wood, now arrayed in autumnal robes of sienna and gold, reminds him that he is in the heart of the enemies' country. Meekly does he ride at a respectful distance behind his pretended master, and well is it for him that he does so; for, suddenly, honest George Gunter reins in his steed, exclaiming, in an undertone, "we are undone—here is Captain Morley, the governor of Arundel Castle." "Never mind," quietly replied the king, "move on." And then follows the dangerous interview so well described by Mr. Ainsworth. Lord Wilmot, Gunter, and the King having dismounted, they slowly pass on, crossing the road from Arundel to Petworth at about three miles north of the Castle; and, still leading their horses, they plunged into the steep, rough, old hollow, well named the "white way," and speedily found themselves in the quiet village of Houghton.

The writer has thus given the tradition of the neighbourhood, which was related to him on the spot; and which certainly appears more probable than that the king should have been conducted through Halnaker and Slindon to the town of Arundel. That would, indeed, have been riding into the lion's mouth, and without the slightest necessity; for though the river Arun could have been crossed only at the bridge at Arundel, or by the bridge at Houghton, the journey by the Downs and Houghton must have been preferred and decided on without a moment's consideration.

This also was the route which good Gilbert White of Selbourne took in his journeys into Sussex "for upwards of thirty years," as he says in the fifty-sixth letter of his charming History of Selbourne.

The facts were, doubtless, mainly as represented in this paper, and the famous *rencontre* took place in Houghton Forest, perhaps when the shades of evening were falling, as Waller and his Round-heads were returning from their day's hunting, to Arundel Castle, from which they were still distant; and not in, or near the town, as the novel informs us.

The precise spot in the forest where the meeting happened is the finest scene for such an incident that the painter could possibly desire: the subject is an admirable one for a Gilbert or a Maclise.

If the reader started from Hambleton soon after day-light on a fourteenth of October, and pursued on horseback the course indicated, he would find the sun far down in the west, or already set as he rode through Houghton, and would not be at all disposed to scale the bold heights of the next range of the South Downs, which are here separated by the broad *embouchure* of the Arun.

Travelling on the hills at night is not without risk, especially in the autumn. The writer remembers that some years since, two neighbour yeomen, attempting to cross the hill one evening on horseback, not far from Houghton, from the house of the one farmer to that of the other, were overtaken by a dense fog. They speedily bewildered themselves and then their horses, and after wandering about till towards morning, without being able to recognize one familiar object, Farmer Bartlett was almost overjoyed to find that instead of having been "spirited" into some *terra incognita*, as they began seriously to fear must be the case, his horse had by great good chance put his head over his own gate! Many such tales are current among frequenters of the Downs, and Gunter must have known that from these and various other causes, the risks the King ran through travelling at night were even greater than those he incurred by day. Our fifth volume records, at page 57, a very interesting arrest of a Parliamentarian officer, probably Colonel Apsley, of Warminghurst, on a December night in 1643, on the very

hill which was now before the King, both Roundheads and Cavaliers scouring the hills in the fog, at almost as much risk to friends as to foes; and the mere sight of the hill before them would remind Gunter of the capture, and lead him to fear that the tables might now be turned with a vengeance, should the King continue his journey.

Shelter for the night had already been provided at Amberley Castle, the residence of the loyal Sir John Briscoe, and there appears to be scarcely sufficient reason to doubt that the tradition is correct which is referred to by the Rev. G. A. Clarkson in his "Notes on Amberley," S. A. Col., Vol. XVII., p. 223, and that the bed-chamber on the east side of the Castle, looking into the churchyard, and still designated King Charles's Room, was really occupied by him on the night of October 14th. It would, indeed, be difficult to find a place more suitable for an escape in case of a sudden night attack, as it is on the very edge of the "Wild Brook," affording facilities for flight to those intimate with the locality, and being extremely dangerous either to horse or foot of strangers.

In proof that the day must have been far spent when Charles reached Amberley, we may refer to Vol IX. of our Collections, p. 51, where we read that eight years before the King's flight, a party of horse set out from Bury Hill, which hill the King was crossing, when he met Colonel Morley, at six o'clock in the morning, and went as far as Petersfield to reconnoitre, and that, though the business was urgent, they did not get back till ten o'clock next morning, having been in their saddles most of the time, as they were "close by the enemy all along," and say they "had noe meat but a peece of bread and cheese . . . and our horses while we eate it, had nott halfe an houres time."

Allowing, therefore, for the slower return journey, when horses and men must have been well-nigh knocked up, the distance being more than sixty miles; and remembering that Hambleton is some ten miles further than Petersfield, in nearly the same direction, it seems clear that it must have been almost or quite dark when Charles reached Houghton Bridge. Indeed, the darkness in Houghton Forest insured both the sharpness of the keeper's challenge, and the escape of the king.

Recurring to the novelist, it should be borne in mind that Arundel Castle is not visible at the distance of two miles on the Chichester road, nor, indeed, is it visible at all in that direction till the traveller emerges from the gorge of the old road immediately upon the Park House valley, at a spot where, in old times, stood the Water Gate of the town.² It is most unlikely also that the King should ride from Hambleton to Arundel in time to meet Waller and a party of troopers going out a-hunting. Of course, too, if our fugitives passed through Arundel at all, they took the way through "Tarrant," or T'e Arun Street, usually styled "The Lower Lane," to the bridge, and so would have no occasion "to mount the ascent on which the proud fortress is planted."

After the above had been written, my attention was kindly directed by M. A. Lower, Esq., to a document printed in "Parry's Coast of Sussex," p. 29. This document appears to be copied from a MS. in the British Museum, entitled "The last act in the miraculous Storie of his M'ties escape: as it was taken from the mouth of Colonell Gounter by a person of worth, a little before his death." The document indicates that the journey from Hambleton to Brighton was accomplished in one day; if so, the poor King is truly said "to undergoe a very hard journey," the distance being more than sixty miles. He had "ridd neere fourty miles" the day before.

Early in the morning of the 15th, the King mounted his horse at Amberley; if, indeed, we may suppose that the MS. referred to gives only a brief outline of the journey, and that Charles really did rest a night at Amberley; otherwise according to the Racton MS., the fugitives, arriving at Houghton, stop at an ale-house for some bread and drink, and there they discuss also two neats' tongues, which the provident Colonel had put into his pockets at Hambleton.

² The Spring "Dick" (Ditch) which here formed the western defence of Arundel and its Castle, rises at some distance up the valley, and runs into the Arun. It was doubtless a much more important stream than it now is; and on it was probably, the mill without an owner, which is mentioned in Domesday; and which is often confounded with the two mills at Offham, said in

the great Record to belong to Earl Roger de Montgomery—these, and not the Arundel mill, being the precursors of the famous mill at Swanbourne Lake, painted by Constable, Fielding, Dewint, and a host of other artists. See Mr. Lower's interesting paper on Sussex Mills mentioned in Domesday, &c.—Suss. Arch. Coll., vol. 5, p. 267.

When climbing the steep ascent of Amberley Mount, the King's horse casts a shoe. This makes it necessary to leave the crest of the Downs, along which is the usual route, and, moving south-east, they came either to Upper or Lower Burpham, or to Lee Farm; probably the latter. It is situated in a deep valley among the hills, completely secluded from the outer world; and here the shoe is replaced. The local tradition of the shrewd blacksmith, not a Sussex man we fear, is well rendered by the author of Ovingdean Grange, except that he makes the place an Inn, and puts it and the smithy on the south side of Angmering park instead of on the north. As the park is quite out of the way from Arundel to Shoreham, the royal party would not have passed through it, even if they had crossed over the bridge at Arundel. The king, doubtless, took the usual track over the Downs to Muntham Furze, having Storrington, with more water mills, Sullington, and Washington in sight at the foot of the hill. Parham park was lost sight of in the *detour* for the shoe. Beyond Sullington is the dark expanse of Heath Common; then comes Warminghurst, of the Apsleys, already referred to, with the churches and cottages of Ashington and Thakeham, nestling among embowering elms; then is seen the broad, green expanse of the delta of the Adur, a mere miniature, however, of the levels of the Arun. This is backed by the villages of Shipley, West Grinstead, with its park and lake, and Knep Castle, Shermanbury, Henfield, and Ashurst. Far off in the background is the town of Horsham, with the high grounds of St. Leonard's and Tilgate Forests, the busy scenes of the Iron works, where were manufactured both the arrow-heads so nobly used by Sussex Yeomen on the classic fields of Agincourt, Cressy, and Poitiers; and, for the king's ignoble days, those cannon and cannon balls which were so completely to change "the pomp and circumstance" of war.

King Charles would cross the highway from Horsham to Broadwater and Worthing at the north of Highden House, and of Muntham, (where resided the staunch Royalist, Sir Thomas Boyer), skirting Chanctonbury Ring, and leaving Wiston at its foot, having Cissbury Ring two miles to the south. We must, therefore, leave Oswald Barcombe, the patriarchal shepherd, to the story-teller and his admirers,

and follow the King, not to "the White Horse at Steyning, which place he would carefully avoid, but down the hill between Steyning and Maudlin, through Bramber and Beeding Street, where they met some of Colonel Herbert Morley's³ soldiers, "who yet did not examine them, nor had they, so far as could be discovered, the least suspicion of the royal passenger" (S. A. C., Vol. V., p. 49). Col. Gunter says, respecting this adventure: "From thence (Houghton) being come to Bramber, we found the streets full of soldiers, on both sides the houses, who unluckily and unknown to me were come hither the night before to guard; but luckily, or rather by very special Providence, were then just come from their guard at Bramber-bridge into the town for refreshment. We came upon them unawares, and were seen before we suspected anything. My Lord Wilmot was ready to turn back, when I stept in and said, "If we do, we are undone. Let us go on boldly, and we shall not be suspected." "He saith well," saith the King. I went before, he followed, and so passed through, without any hindrance. It was then between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. We went on, but had not gone far but a new terror pursued us—the same soldiers riding after us as fast as they could. Whereupon the King gave me a hem. I slacked my pace till they came up to me, and by that time the soldiers were come, who rudely passed by us, being in a narrow lane, so that we could hardly keep our saddles for them, but passed by without any further hurt, being some thirty or forty in number."

Once more up the Downs goes the King, but in company of Lord Wilmot only, the truly noble Gunter taking the high road through Old Shoreham, and skirting the Downs just south of Portslade. He reached the George Inn at Brighton, which he found free from all strangers; and having taken the best room in the house, and ordered his supper, he "entertained himself" with a glass of wine, which the reader will doubtless consider to have been well earned. We return to the King with Lord Wilmot, who has been terribly scared by the soldiers; they follow the broad track over the hills from Beeding to White Lot, and so at last to Portslade, between Shoreham and Brighton, where on the west side of the village

³ Of Glynde, near Lewes.

green, still stands the cottage, with high-pitched roof visible from the Brighton and Portsmouth Railway, at which, in a little chamber, cunningly contrived near the chimney in the roof, the King lay till Tattersell had completed his arrangements for the voyage to Normandy. At least, so says tradition; but the romantic hiding here, and the visit to Ovingdean Grange, so charming to read in Mr. Ainsworth's story, are sadly at variance with the Colonel's manuscript, in which he states that the King and Lord Wilmot came direct to the George at Brighton. Here they supped together, and then, "Up comes mine host; he runs to the King, and catching his hand, said, 'It shall not be said that I have not kissed the best man's hand in England.'" The King soon retires to his chamber; Gunter begins to treat with Captain Tattersell, who had been sitting with the King at supper. It had already been agreed, through the agency of Mr. Francis Mansell, a French merchant of Chichester, that Tattersell should receive fifty pounds for the voyage to France, and the Colonel, because the wind has suddenly become fair, offers ten pounds more to get off that night. The Colonel is compelled by the loyal but greedy skipper to give his word to insure the ship for two hundred pounds; and the King and Lord Wilmot go on board at "two of the morning." Our Sussex "Worthy" takes his leave, craves "his Ma'tie's pardon if anything had happened," &c. He sees them sail at eight of the clock, and it is afternoon before they are out of sight. He says they landed at *Fackham* (*Féchamp*) at ten a.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 15th. They were no sooner landed, but the wind turned, and a violent storm arose, &c., and he concludes by saying, "I was not gone out of the towne of Brighthemston two houres but soldiers came thither to search for a tall black man 6 foot and 4 inches high."

Here we take our leave of the Monarch, and of the reader too, with the parting suggestion that if he would see Sussex, and enjoy one of the most delightful rides imaginable, he should follow the course thus indicated as that pursued by King Charles the Second.