

The Old Stones of Staines



**How the stones might
look if they were here
today**

The Old Stones Of Staines

Staines means "stones" and it is thought to come from a group of nine stones mentioned in a twelfth century charter of Chertsey Abbey which delineated the boundaries of the Abbey lands, and was reported in *Up Pontes* by Christine Lake. The settlement of Staines is very ancient, with evidence of habitation from Mesolithic times; the Romans had an fairly important town here called "Ad Pontes" ("by the bridges") as it was the place where the London to Silchester road crossed the Thames and Colne, and was about half-way between them (a day's march from each). There are the remains of an old bridgehead at The Hythe; this is not the Roman one (there were also Saxon and Norman bridges here) but may be on the same site. Stukeley says that the whole town was bounded by a ditch. The charter says this:

"Down to that Eyre that stands in the Thames at Loddors Lake and so along Thames by mid-stream to Glenthuthe (Glant: M25 roundabout), from Glenthuthe by mid-stream along Thames to the Huthe (Hythe) before Negen Stones". ("Negen stanes" is Saxon for "nine stones").

If this was a prehistoric stone circle, it is the only one known in the south-east of England; the nearest today is the Rollright Stones in Oxfordshire. And when we look at the site which seems to be indicated, now occupied by a roundabout on the Egham side of Staines Bridge, there is a definite convergence of ways, and each of them seems to mark a ley; though, curiously, the ways do not meet at a single point but rather skirt a small area, in the manner that leys more often do with larger monuments such as camps and hillforts. This could possibly indicate the size of the site. Not only that, but with the site mentioned in the charter so

clearly marked out by alignments, it is a clear affirmation of Watkins' discovery of leys, now eighty years after that discovery was made, and in spite of the opposition that has been made to it over the years.

The most striking alignment is that of the Roman road coming from London to Staines, now the A30 and Staines High Street; the alignment goes through the proposed site, although the Roman road diverges from it slightly to cross the river downstream of the present bridge. (At this point, in 1977, a modern monolith was erected, the Jubilee Stone, on the Queen's Silver Jubilee). Was this to avoid the Negen Stones, which could have been quite sizeable if the Romans bypassed them in this way rather than removing them? It is not known precisely where the road ran on the other side of the river; several paved stretches have been found but there could have been spurs as well as the main road. A stone monument near Great Fosters Hotel claims to mark the route, but others have theorised that it runs along what is now Egham Causeway, raised in the thirteenth century as the area was prone to flooding. The next place it certainly appears is Sunningdale, from where it runs across Swinley Forest as a striking straight track towards Silchester.

The London stretch of the Roman road is also a ley, and is interesting confirmation that the Romans used the old alignments in planning their roads, but diverged where practicality demanded it, often following another alignment. Coming from Blacknest (Virginia Water) it goes through the Negen Stones site, along Staines High Street (through the Jubilee Stone) and is coincident with the Roman A30 to Feltham, from where it becomes a mean-follower until Brentford. It goes through a church in Hounslow and two in Chiswick, then runs closely parallel to the

A402 in Hammersmith meeting another church there, and another coincident stretch of road.

The Egham Causeway is another of the alignments converging on the proposed site of the stones; a ley which passes through a Neolithic and Bronze Age site by Runnymede motorway bridge. It passes across Coopers Hill, Egham, through the Neolithic site with post holes now at the southern approach of Runnymede motorway bridge, along the mean-following Egham Causeway (built in the thirteenth century against local flooding; a candidate for the continuation of the Roman road) for about a mile to the Negen Stones roundabout, then through a cross-roads and the Spelthorne moot site. This is the site of the meeting place of Spelthorne Hundred in medieval times; a field called Spelthorne Pasture shown on the Ashford Award map of 1811.

It is then coincident with the A308 for about three miles, passing through Sunbury Cross. In the sixties when my interest in leys began this was a large multi-junction with several leys found going across it; one is the Silchester Ley found by Alfred Watkins. Now it is the terminus of the M3, and a mound like a latter-day Silbury Hill is on the site, supporting the road. The alignment continues through the southern edge of Bushy Park, two churches in New Malden and a multijunction with church at Morden.

The third alignment is the one running up Thorpe Road, Egham Hythe, close to St. Paul's Church there which is visible from the Negen Stones site. Coming north-east it goes through Chobham church, a tumulus near Longcross, a coincident stretch of the B388, the coincident Thorpe Road, the Negen Stones site, goes through churches in Hayes and North Harrow and a prominent cross-roads at Stanmore.

When aligning the site with St. Mary's Church, Staines, the line is also found to go south through St. Peter's Church Chertsey,

from where another ley was followed some years ago. Going north, it skirts the fort at Gerrards Cross and continues through the church St. Michael and All Angels and nearby Sycamore Corner cross-roads at Amersham-on-the-Hill. St. Mary's Church is 19th century but is on the site of a stone church built by St. Erminildis in 675, on a pronounced rise in the ground. It also has a tradition of stones at the site, and this has been linked with the Negen Stones charter in the Staines Town Trail, but this is unlikely to be the site of these stones as it is not near The Hythe, which is a riverside road, presumably originally a wharf, on the Egham Hythe side of the river. However, it could be another site of stones.

Prehistoric London, by Nick Merriman, mentions several ancient sites in the Staines area, particularly a Neolithic causewayed enclosure and a cursus at Stanwell, but does not give their exact locations, so some research was done on the Surrey Sites and Monuments Record. This is an Access database of the known prehistoric sites in Surrey, based at County Hall, Kingston and available to members of the public by appointment. Precise grid references were given of all the sites, (most of which are no longer present) and these enhanced the alignments found considerably, and even produced another line of four investigated sites. The cursus position was also located and each of its two sections seems to have a ley running along it.

The site of the Neolithic causewayed enclosure mentioned in *Prehistoric London* is now Junction 13 of the M25, although there is a picture of the cropmarks in that book. It was excavated in 1961-63 and was found to have had inner banks which had been ploughed flat. Pottery of the type found at Windmill Hill in Wiltshire was found there.

When aligned through the Negen Stones site this alignment was found to pass through Weybridge Church, nineteenth century but

the site of an older church. Coming north through the main crossroads at Painshill, then passing through Weybridge Church and the Negen Stones site, the line continues through the causewayed camp, a cross-roads in Slough and a church and crossroads (not together) at Farnham Royal.

The four main sites found from the Surrey Sites and Monuments Record, amazingly, form another alignment. These are the causewayed camp, the Runnymede Bridge Neolithic site, a Bronze Age/Iron Age enclosure on Staines Moor and a Bronze Age enclosure ditch at Petters Sports Field, Egham. This alignment, when extended, goes through a church in Hayes and two in Borehamwood.

The Stanwell Cursus, a linear feature of parallel ditches at least three miles long (though its north and south ends had been eradicated before investigation) runs along the western edge of Heathrow Airport, from Stanwell to a point near Junction 15 of the M25. It was originally thought to be a stretch of Roman road, then found to be a Neolithic cursus. It has two straight stretches, each of which has an interesting alignment running along it. The southern stretch, going south, aligns with the site of a Neolithic ring ditch at Shepperton Green. Going north, it goes through a crossroads at Oldhouse Farm, Gerrards Cross, a church in Gerrards Cross, a coincident road at Chalfont St. Giles, and meets the St. Mary's, Staines ley at Sycamore Corner cross-roads, near St. Michael's Church, Amersham-on-the-Hill. The northern stretch alignment, going south, goes through the Weybridge Monument to skirt St. George's Hill hillfort. Going north, it goes through a church in Iver, a cross-roads at Iver Heath, a moat at Chalfont St. Peter, and a closely mean-following road by Pollards Wood.

The Staines area seems to have had a prehistoric landscape which is comparable to the one in Wiltshire, with the Negen Stones and the cursus even seeming to parallel the Stonehenge arrangement.

It is now almost completely eradicated by the modern environment, but luckily the sites were investigated and their positions recorded just in time. And they show that the ancient ley system discovered by Alfred Watkins is indeed a reality.

Michael Behrend Archive - An archive of downloadable republications of earth mysteries literature, including Watkins works and pre-Watkins works studying alignments and landscape geometry

Egham and Thorpe Virtual Roman Museum - an on-line museum of the Roman roads in the area of Egham and Thorpe, extending to Staines and the Roman stretch of the A30.

THE OLD BRIDGEHEAD



This old bridgehead is a little downstream from the present Staines Bridge. It is not the Roman one (there have been Saxon and Norman bridges here) but may be on the same site.

The site of the nine stones mentioned in the Chertsey Abbey charter, near The Hythe, is a roundabout on the





Egham side of Staines Bridge.

The Nine Stones at Winterbourne Abbas, Dorset (above)- possibly a similar size. The Staines stone circle may have looked something like this.

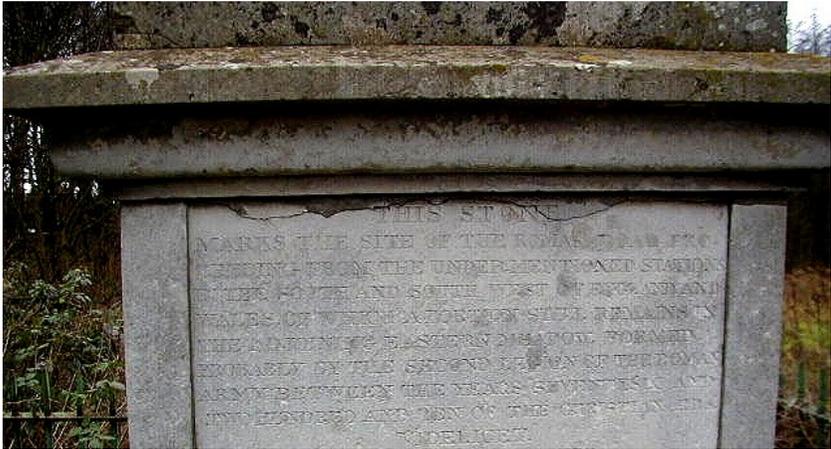


THE JUBILEE STONE

The Jubilee Stone, erected in 1977 to mark The Queen's Silver Jubilee, is on the High Street, which is on the Roman road from London pointing at the Negen Stones and coincident with one of its leys.

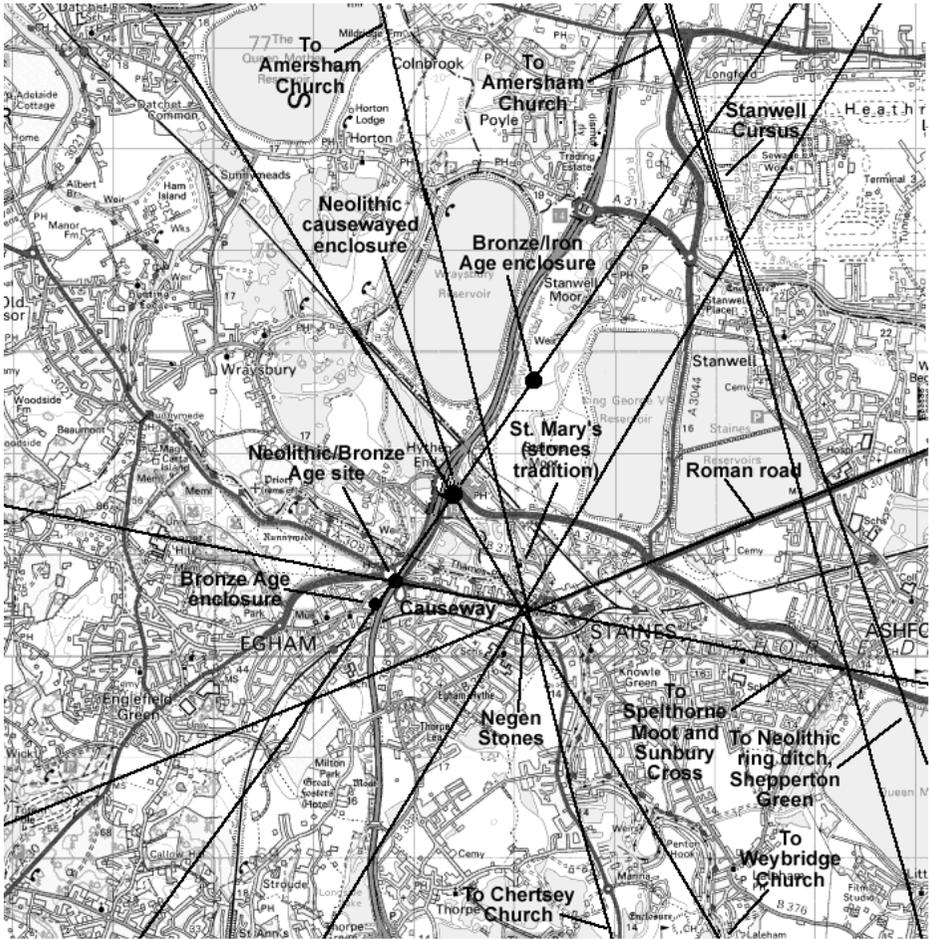


THE ROMAN ROAD NEAR GREAT FOSTERS

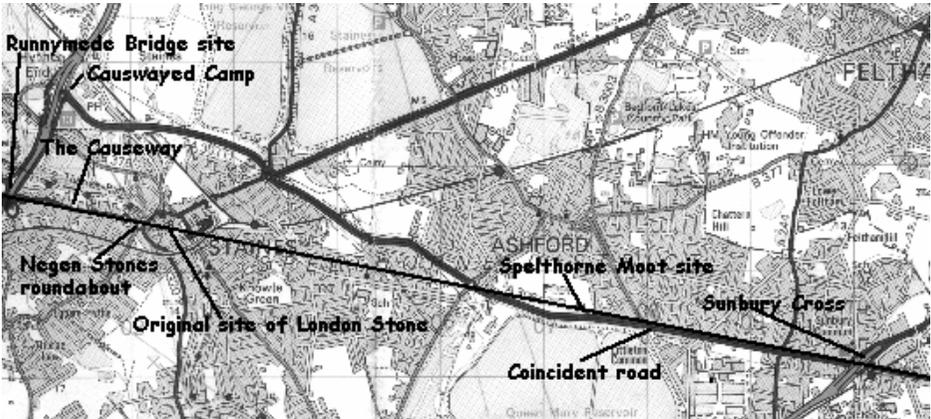


The stone near Great Fosters Hotel, claiming to mark the site of the Roman road. There is a ridge in the field next to it, but this could be a spur and not the main road.

THE PREHISTORIC LANDSCAPE OF STAINES



THE EGHAM CAUSEWAY



The Causeway ley



The Egham Causeway, looking towards the Negen Stones roundabout. The causeway was built in the thirteenth century as a path across the flood plain. As well as this, it is one contender for the route of the Roman road from the bridge at Staines to Sunningdale, where the Silchester road again appears with certainty. It is also coincident with the best ley going through the Negen Stones site - passing through the Neolithic/Bronze Age site near Runnymede Bridge, the Spelthorne Moot site (place of meeting of Spelthorne Hundred in Saxon times) and along

the bridge at Staines to Sunningdale, where the Silchester road again appears with certainty. It is also coincident with the best ley going through the Negen Stones site - passing through the Neolithic/Bronze Age site near Runnymede Bridge, the Spelthorne Moot site (place of meeting of Spelthorne Hundred in Saxon times) and along

another coincident road to the important ley centre of Sunbury Cross.

THE ROMAN ROAD TO SILCHESTER



The Roman Road, known as the Devil's Highway, going towards Staines and London, from the Roman Star on Swinley Forest.



The Roman Road going towards Silchester, from the Roman Star on Swinley Forest.

SUNBURY CROSS

Sunbury Cross was once a large multijunction with a Victorian clock tower in the centre; it is now the terminal of the M3 and has an enormous latter-day Silbury Hill supporting the road.

The clock tower has been moved to a less imposing position at the side.



It was found quite early on that it is an important ley centre; one of its leys is the Silchester Ley, previously discovered at the Roman city at Silchester by Alfred Watkins. The Egham Causeway ley through the Negen Stones site goes through it, first picking up a

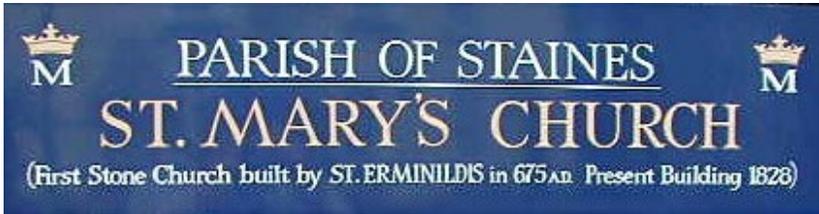
quite long stretch of road leading to it.

THE EGHAM HYTHERoad



Looking from the Negen Stones site to St. Paul's, Egham Hythe - the ley was found by dowsing to go through the west end of the church. The alignment is with the more distant visible part of the road.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH



St. Mary's Church is 19th century but is on the site of a stone church built by St. Erminildis in 675, on a pronounced rise in the ground. It also has a tradition of stones at the site, and this has been linked with the Negen Stones charter in the Staines Town Trail, but this is unlikely to be the site of these stones as it is not near The Hythe, which is a riverside road, presumably originally a wharf, on the Egham Hythe side of the river. However, it could be another site of stones.

The ley running from it to the Negen Stones site goes on through Chertsey Church.

CHERTSEY CHURCH



St. Peter's, Chertsey is on the Negen Stones ley which also passes through St. Mary's, Staines; it is also a ley centre with another prominent ley investigated some years ago; the one running along Ferry Lane and Guildford Street.

SYCAMORE CORNER AND ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, AMERSHAM



Sycamore Corner, hilltop cross-roads at Amersham-on-the-Hill, where the ley through the Negen Stones and St. Mary's, Staines, meets the one coming along the southern arm of the Stanwell Cursus.



Amersham-on-the-Hill dates from 1892 when the railway arrived, and is still separate from the ancient Old Town below it. Before this, it was Amersham Common.

St. Michael and All Angels, Sycamore Road, Amersham-on-the-Hill - near Sycamore Corner. The St. Mary's - Negen Stones ley passes through it. This church was opened in 1966, though the original smaller church (now the church hall) was built in 1919.

NEOLITHIC CAUSEWAYED ENCLOSURE

These cropmarks show a Neolithic causewayed enclosure near Staines, now covered by Junction 13 of the M25. It was excavated in 1961-63 and was found to have had inner banks which had been ploughed flat. Pottery of the type found at Windmill Hill in Wiltshire was found there. The ley from it to the Negen Stones site goes through Weybridge church.



NEOLITHIC CAUSE- WAYED ENCLOSURE

THE STANWELL CURSUS



This cursus is at least three miles long, running in two linear sections from a field in Stanwell up through the western side of Heathrow Airport. None is left now; the airport has claimed most of it, and gravel workings have destroyed the Stanwell end. However, an interesting ley runs along each of its sections (see map of area). Investigation of the cursus during excavation of the Perry Oaks Sludge Works, Hillingdon revealed remarkable evidence for a short avenue of posts c35m long, apparently constructed prior to the cutting of the ditches, on the same alignment. The cursus had an internal bank that, although ploughed down, left a slight rise even in the modern ground surface

WEYBRIDGE CHURCH



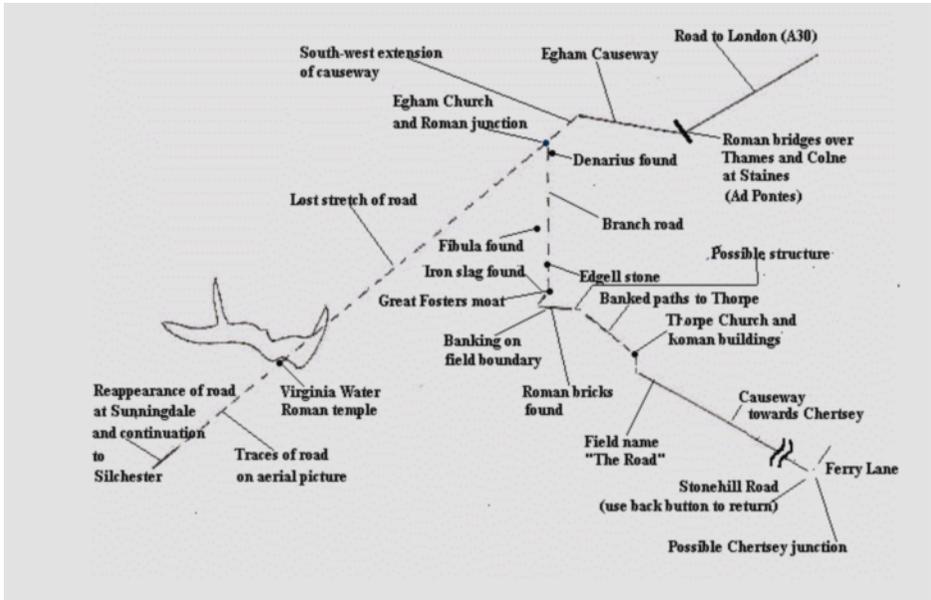
The present church is nineteenth century, but there was an earlier church immediately adjacent to it on the north side.



**The old church
at Weybridge.**

The Roman Road

Between the two great cities of Londinium (London) and Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester)



The course of the Roman road between the two great cities of Londinium (London) and Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester) has been known for a very long time - all except one small section, between Sunningdale and the Roman bridge site at Staines (Ad Pontes). Various people tried to find it, including the historian Frederic Turner and Lieutenant (later Sir George) Gray in 1835 while at Sandhurst, but to no avail - it was just not where it was expected to be.

Then in 1964, David Barker (then a schoolboy, now a local historian) found a bank at the bottom of the garden where he

was living then in Egham, and digging into it found some Roman and Bronze Age pottery. The bank could be seen to be pointing towards the end of the Egham Causeway, so was presumed to be an extension of that - but at an angle to it, pointing south-west. More importantly, in the other direction it pointed directly towards, and in alignment with, the known road at Sunningdale. So the possibility arose that the Silchester road ran from Sunningdale north-easterly to Egham, then along the Causeway to the Roman bridge point at Staines. The Causeway (assumed to be medieval because of records of its building then) could thus, as the Historic Environment Record says, be the Roman road remade in medieval times. This is why the road was not found before - it was assumed to go straight to Staines, which it does not.

Also, there is a stone in Stroude Road, Egham, near Great Fosters hotel, which is inscribed with a statement that a Roman road runs in the adjoining meadow. Frederic Turner said it is too far south to be the Silchester road, but could be part of a branch road. A map of 1802 published in "Echoes of Egham" (coincidentally published by David Barker) shows a footpath going southwards from Egham Church which would if extended go past the stone. It would then go through the moat behind Great Fosters hotel (older than the sixteenth century building) to a point on Stroude Road where there is a right-angled banking. The bank can then be followed along this field boundary and (with some breaks) all the way to Thorpe (where there is evidence of Roman buildings) and nearly to Chertsey.

