

Cycling UK Stevenage

Myths and Mysteries Tales

Long North Loop

<https://footpathapp.com/routes/5b19276d-2f4b-4bcf-8b60-bfce1cb6322e>

1. Balloon Stone

This stone monument commemorates the daring first hot air balloon flight in England. It flew from Moorfield, briefly touched down at Welham Green and finally ended at Standon Green End.

Located at 2 New Cottages, Standon Green End, High Cross, Ware SG11 1BP.

This stone monument was built in c1784. It was put up for William Baker of Bayfordbury to commemorate the hot-air balloon flight by Vincent Lunardi in 1784. The inscribed plate on it was renewed in 1875 for Mr Giles Puller of Youngsbury. It has the inscription 'Let posterity know, and knowing be astonished, that on the 15th day of September 1784 Vincent Lunardi of Lucca in Tuscany, the first aerial traveller in Britain, mounting from the artillery ground in London and traversing the regions of the air for two hours and fifteen minutes, in this spot revisited the earth.'

<https://www.northmymmshistory.uk/2020/06/the-historic-north-mymms-balloon-landing.html>

2. Pudding Stone

It was believed that puddingstone could ward off evil, sometimes being called hagstones. Small pieces were carried in pockets. Larger blocks were placed on doorsteps, gate posts, on village greens and in churchyards. A parish record of 1662 records how a suspected witch was to be prevented from escaping from her grave, "A hagstone be placed on the coffin for her bodie within be bewitched." I've seen this three times on the internet, but never a reference to which parish record, or even which parish. Other websites talk about putting puddingstones on top of coffins to protect the deceased, again to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck. They have been used as grave markers and coffin stones. Some large puddingstones still mark graves. Here it plays a role in Mayday celebrations.

<https://anhistoriersmiscellany.com/2016/10/08/standon-puddingstone/>

3. Piers Shonks Burial

Sir Piers Shonks was a legendary figure in the village of Brent Pelham in Hertfordshire, England, whose tomb is within the north wall of the village's church. According to local legend, Shonks slew a dragon that was causing havoc in the district and later cheated the Devil from claiming his soul by being buried within the walls of the church.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piers_Shonks

4. The Blind Fiddler

One of many villages to the north-east of Buntingford, Anstey was evidently significant enough in mediaeval times to have had a castle. It also produced the curious legend of Blind George the fiddler and the Devil's Hole.

The Devil's Hole is a tunnel rumoured to run from a chalk pit called Cave Gate to the castle. It's said that no-one had dared explore to find out the truth of the story until one night, at least two centuries ago. A blind fiddler called George was playing and drinking at the Chequers (now called The Blind Fiddler) in the village when talk turned to the Devil's Hole. Having had a number of drinks and "grown quarrelsome and pot-valiant", George declared that he, his fiddle and his dog would venture into the tunnel and find out the truth of the matter.

Followed by a large entourage, many of them begging him to abandon the challenge, George walked to Cave Gate and declared he'd follow the tunnel "though the Devil himself were at the end of it." As he entered the cave, led by his dog, he called to the villagers to follow his progress above ground by the sound of his fiddle.

Then he vanished from sight, and the unearthly sound of an unknown fiddle tune rose from beneath. The villagers followed it across the fields until they were about halfway to the castle. At that point the fiddle rose to a nightmarish shriek and stopped. Only silence came from the tunnel.

The people rushed back to Cave Gate just in time to see the dog race out. His tail was gone and his hair singed off, and he ran off into the darkness howling as if all the devils in Hell were behind him, never to be seen again.

Blind George, too, was never seen again, and it was generally assumed that the Devil had indeed been there to meet him. No-one ventured in to find out, though, and soon afterwards the entrance was sealed up, both to deter the foolhardy and to prevent George's ghost from escaping. It's said, though, that when snow falls on Anstey the first to melt is always a straight line from Cave Gate to the castle.

<https://www.hertsmemories.org.uk/content/herts-history/towns-and-villages/anstey/blind-fiddler-anstey>

5. **Jack O'Legs Grave**

According to local legend, Jack lived in a cave in a wood at Weston near the mediaeval town of Baldock. When one year there was a poor harvest the Baldock bakers raised the price of flour, so Jack ambushed the bakers and gave the flour to his friends in Weston. In revenge, the bakers caught and blinded him. They gave him a final wish. Jack asked to be pointed in the direction of Weston, so he could shoot an arrow with his bow. Where the arrow landed, he wished to be buried. The bakers gave him his huge bow which nobody else could pull. He shot his arrow three miles, into the churchyard of Holy Trinity Church, Weston, which is where he was buried.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_o%27_Legs#:~:text=In%20folklore%2C%20Jack%20o'%20Legs,of%20Holy%20Trinity%20Church%2C%20Weston.

6. **Henry Trigg's grave**

Henry Trigg (c. 1667 – 6 October 1724) was an English grocer who became famous following his death for his eccentric will which had his body placed in a coffin in the rafters of his barn, which became a tourist attraction. Trigg later became the subject of a ghost story. Trigg's barn and his former home, was 37 High Street, Stevenage. His coffin is no longer to be seen.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Trigg_\(testator\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Trigg_(testator))

7. **Six Hills**

Local legend holds that they were the work of the Devil, who, sitting one day looking down on the Great North Road, began to amuse himself by heaving clods of earth at the passers-by. He missed six times and in a temper threw a seventh clod over his shoulder, hitting the spire of Graveley church and knocking it askew. The spire is crooked to this day. The holes in Whomerley Wood show where the Devil dug out his missiles, and the six failed shots lie in a line alongside the road and form the Six Hills.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_Hills#:~:text=Local%20legend%20holds%20that%20they,church%20and%20knocking%20it%20askew

With special thanks to Andy Walker (for the original idea) and Jill Borchers (for help with producing the mapping).

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