

UN PETIT TOUR DANS LE WILTSHIRE.

June 2, 2012 and one of my last visits to Wiltshire before leaving England permanently for distant lands overseas. It was the day of the Queen's Jubilee, and as there was little of interest crop circle wise I decided to do a final tour of the sites I had become familiar with over the previous sixteen years. I stopped off at Avebury and Silbury Hill to take some photos and then moved on to Alton Barnes where I planned to take some last shots of the countryside surrounding Adam's Grave (See Culture-crop archives Photos Terrestres 2012). I followed the White Horse Trail which took me round the back of Adam's Grave and I had stopped to prepare my camera for some photos when I noticed a large pile of wood boards piled up on the flank of the hill below me. There was a small group of people enjoying a picnic nearby, making the most of the beautiful weather, and I presumed that this had something to do with the Jubilee celebrations. All this was a bit unexpected but there you are, I could hardly ask them to move to one side whilst I took a photo of the view. I went down and took a close-up of the wood pile that the late afternoon sun had lit up with an almost orange hue. I found this very picturesque contrasting as it did with the blue sky behind it. I then moved back up to take a picture of the Vale of Pewsey, and the countryside beyond. I had turned to take a photo of the White Horse when I felt a presence level with my right shoulder, and I swung round to find myself face to face with a woman who I assumed had come up from the group below. She looked at me, then asked me in a tone you would address a child caught stealing apples, what I thought I was doing. Just her presence made me feel very uncomfortable and I replied that I was just there to take photos. She appeared however to have anticipated my reply and let me know, in a very authoritarian manner, that I wasn't welcome there.



I had never been spoken to in that way before, not even, if my memory serves me correctly, as a child. I was stunned for a moment, then found my voice and calmly asked her why. She continued as if she was reading me my rights, I was apparently doing something unlawful. I asked her again to tell me exactly what it was I was doing wrong by being up on the hill, a place of public access and an official walker's trail. She stopped for a moment then accused me of, potentially, stepping on a rare variety of wild orchid. At this point I actually became interested in the orchid story, being interested in all plants, especially rare ones, and asked her to show me one. She was unable to do so and returned to her group of picnickers. I stood for a moment trying to assimilate what had just happened; no obvious sign of an orchid, but a great pile of wood that I presumed the group of people below had ordered to be delivered and dumped up on the hill. If so, how many rare orchids were crushed under the boots of the men she and her friends would have got to hump it up there? And how many rare orchids were to be burnt at the stake under it?

I had not planned to stay around any later than early evening but I just had to see what was going to happen that night so I returned after dark to witness the event; the night-time Jubilee celebrations with an orchid roasting bonfire. When it got going it didn't look at all as if the inhabitants of Alton Barnes were present, just a few family and friends, it seemed. I have no idea who they were, although the woman did seem vaguely familiar. La fin.

