



Hippenscombe, Chute Causeway & Fosbury Camp

Hippenscombe is a natural coomb or bowl in the chalk downland north of Upper Chute. Its floor is known as Hippenscombe Bottom and its dramatic contours have become a mecca for artists. In earlier times it was part of Savernake Forest and it evidently represented a formidable obstacle to the Romans when building the Winchester-Mildenhall road.

At Conholt Park, north-east of Upper Chute, the Roman road deviates sharply to the west and then swings in a four-mile semi-circle around Hippenscombe Bottom until it joins up again with the original axis of the road at Tidcombe. The southern section of this deviation is known as Chute Causeway.

North of the causeway and roughly parallel to it is Grim's Ditch, probably a prehistoric earthwork. Hippenscombe farm which lies at the centre of the bowl was the scene of one of the many riots throughout southern England in 1830, collectively called the Captain Swing Riots, the result of the frustration of agricultural workers over low wages and the increase of mechanisation in farming; the Hippenscombe ringleaders were transported for life.

Diagonally opposite Chute Causeway to the north-east is Fosbury Camp, a 33-acre bivallate (an earthwork with two banks, each with a ditch) Iron Age hillfort that commands the eastern entrance to the Hippenscombe bowl. Sited on Knolls Down, the northern part of the fort is wooded but the steep-sided double rampart and ditch on its south side are clearly visible. From the ramparts on the eastern edge there is a panoramic view to the south and south-east, and the south-western corner provides a good view into the centre of the bowl. The hillfort is not accessible by road but can be reached by footpaths from either Fosbury or Vernham Dean.

