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SPONSORED BY

SHERE AND DISTRICT RURAL
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

To all who visit this lovely countryside
WE APPEAL

Please help to keep its natural beauty unspoilt by litter.
Tissues and tins, cigarette packets, bottles, sweet-papers
and the like—thoughtlessly thrown down or left behind
on the ground—disfigure the paths and glades and spoil
the enjoyment of others.

Friend when you stray
Or sit and take your ease
On down or heath
Or under spreading trees,
Pray leave no traces
Of your wayside meal:
No paper bag
Or scattered orange peel.
Let no one say,
And say it to your shame,
That all was beauty here
Until *you* came.

Any enquiries about these pamphlets will be forwarded to the
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THE STORY OF STEPHEN LANGTON
AND OF
THE SILENT POOL

THESE ARE LEGENDS, part of our Surrey folk-lore, and the first concerns that notable character, Stephen Langton. He was born in about 1150 at Friday Street, the tiny hamlet by the lake near Abinger, and his father who was a yeoman seems to have perished in the Crusades. His wife did not long survive him; she died a natural death and was buried in the churchyard of Abinger.

Stephen was thus early left an orphan. He was a lovely boy of nine or ten years old, with fair curly hair and blue eyes, and with such a beautiful singing voice that he was adopted by some monks and taken away by them to sing in their choir. The monks educated him and fed him well, so that he grew into a sturdy youth, but when his voice cracked they had no further use for him and he wandered away.

At the age of eighteen he came to live with his widowed aunt at Albury and there fell in love with his cousin Alice, but he was never destined to wed her. One summer evening, strolling in the woods between St. Martha's Chapel and the Silent Pool, they were attacked by a band of ruffians headed by Prince John. Alice was seized and carried off and her lover beaten and left for dead. Stephen, however, was no weakling; he quickly recovered and went in search of his lady. He discovered Prince John and his band at Tanglely Manor. Not knowing how else to rescue her he set fire to the house and in the confusion seized his sweet Alice. Alas! she had swooned, and Stephen thought her to be dead—which was extremely foolish of him because in those days maidens were always swooning. He bore her to the Chapel of St. Martha, laid her before the altar and left her.

In utter despair he rushed off to Newark Abbey near Ripley and became a monk. Alice, of course, was soon found by kind people and nursed back to health; when, believing Stephen must be dead, she became a nun at St. Catherine's, Guildford.

Yet another tragedy took place shortly after this at the Silent Pool. A beautiful maiden of the name of Emma was in the habit of bathing in this pool, and as in those days there were no bathing costumes she bathed in a state of nature. The wicked Prince John heard of this and one summer morn while the lovely maid was bathing, hanging from the branch of a tree and dipping in and out of the clear water, he rode up with his band of ruffians. In her shame Emma let go of the tree and waded in ever deeper and deeper, Prince John pursuing her on his horse, until out of her depth she sank with a great cry. Her brother hearing the cry rushed in after her, but being unable to swim failed to drag her out, and both perished.

The fair Emma now haunts the Pool. If you come on a moonlight night you can see a white form dipping in and out of the water, and if you are lucky you may hear a wild unearthly shriek as she disappears.

Meanwhile our hero and heroine prospered. Alice in course of time became an Abbess and Stephen an Archbishop.

One regrets to relate that Stephen (though he must have been taught by the monks to love and forgive his enemies), knowing of the tragedy at the Silent Pool and that Alice, though alive, could never be his, nursed an undying hatred for King John and thirsted for revenge.

After serving as a monk for a time he went abroad to France and Italy, always distinguishing himself, and at length was made Archbishop of Canterbury by the Pope. He returned to England where King John was forced to receive him, and Stephen's final triumph over this wicked Monarch was on the 19th of June 1215, when, at Runnymede, he was forced to sign the Magna Charta, and the first witness to sign after him was the Archbishop.

Stephen's aim was at last accomplished: he had humbled the King and brought him trembling to his feet. He now had but one wish left—to visit the love of his boyhood. He proceeded to St. Martha's Chapel where he celebrated Mass and afterwards commanded the Abbess to his presence. The sight of her brought back all his old memories, he clasped her to his breast and pressed his lips to hers. Alas! a nun may never be kissed—even by an Archbishop—and it was no wonder that she swooned in his arms, and this time to such effect that she died, and was buried at St. Martha's.

Some years later Stephen died in his bed of a heart attack and was buried in Canterbury Cathedral, a fitting resting place for one of the greatest Archbishops England has ever known.

The Silent Pool, which is formed from a strong spring called in earlier days Sherborne, lies at the foot of the North Downs below Newlands Corner. Such spots were often held sacred in the past, and people are said to have gone there in Roman times to "pluck the palms" and to buy a mug of "Roman water". Later, when efforts were made to divert pagan rites into more Christian channels, these ancient customs gave place to the Sherborne Palm Sunday Fair, held near the Pool. Large crowds came annually to this Fair, but in 1811 the Rector of Albury had it stopped (probably because it was considered unsuitable for a Sunday) and substituted a May Day Fair held in what is now Albury village street, including a maypole he himself presented.