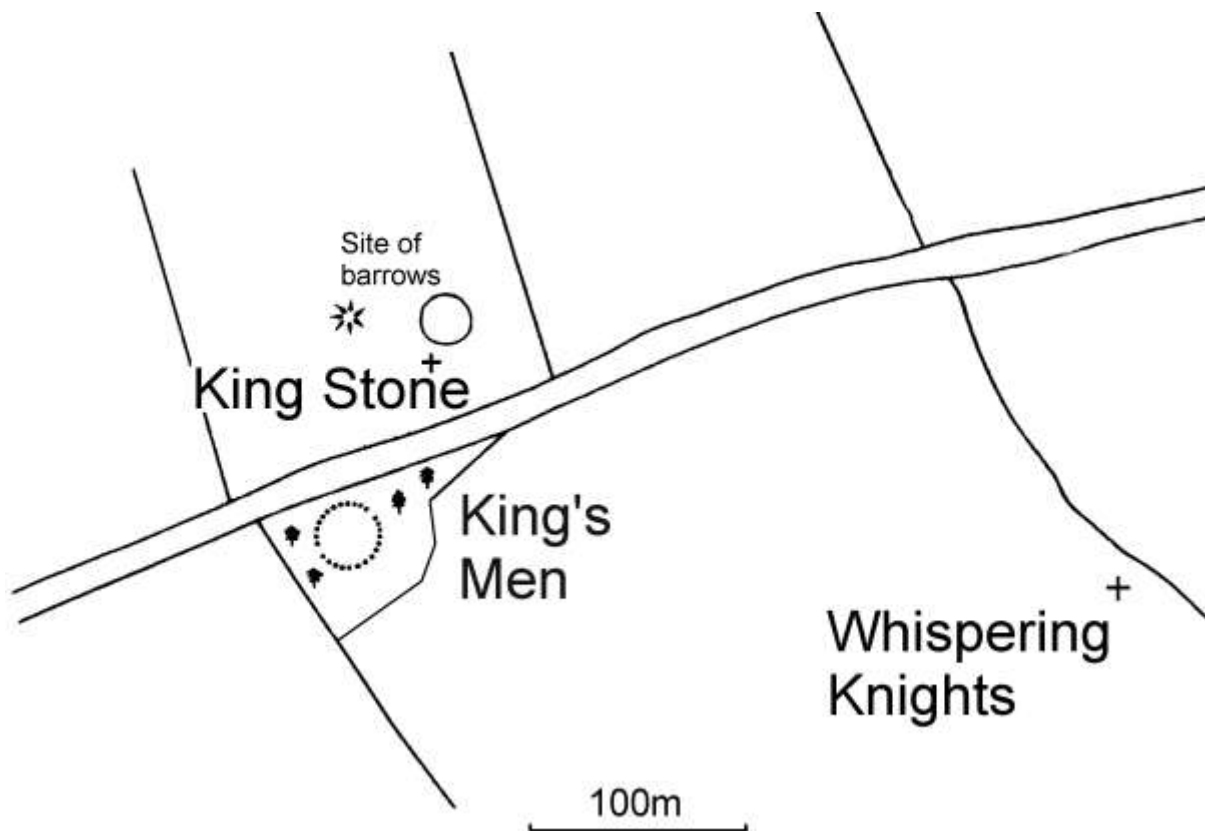


## The Rollright Stones

Visited 9<sup>th</sup> July 2010



The Rollright Stones are a complex of megalithic oolitic limestone monuments near the villages of Long Compton, Great Rollright and Little Rollright. They lie across the present county border between Oxfordshire and Warwickshire.

The complex consists of three separate sites:

**The King's Men stone circle**

**The King Stone**

**The Whispering Knights**

According to local folklore the stones are the petrified remains of a king and his knights, however, each set of stones has been found to date from a different period.

The name "Rollright" is thought to derive from "Hrolla-landriht" meaning the land of Hrolla.

### **The King's Men:**

The Rollright Stone Circle is related to Cumbrian circles such as "Swinside" and "Long Meg & her Daughters" in the Lake District. Similarities include size, shape, close-set stones, astronomically-aligned entrances and a pair of outlying portals where gates were hung to stop the sheep from straying into the road.

The King's Men dates to around 2500-2000 BC and consists of 77 closely-spaced stones of heavily weathered local oolitic limestone. They form a stone circle 33 metres in diameter. The stones are set on top of a circular bank with an entrance to the southeast marked by two portal stones.

There were originally as many as 105 stones but many have been removed. Approximately a third of the stones were put back in place when the monument was restored in 1882 and all fallen stones were replaced in their original foundations. In drawings shortly before that date there were only 25!

The Stones were scheduled under the 1882 Ancient Monuments Protection Act (at the same time as Stonehenge and Avebury).



### **The King Stone:**

Believed to be of Middle Bronze Age origin, its purpose and age remain unclear. Some experts believe that it might be an outlier to the Stone Circle.

The King Stone is a single, weathered monolith, 2.4 metres high by 1.5 metres wide, and stands 76 metres east of the King's Men.

The stone was erected between 1800-1500 BC and is believed to have been a marker stone for an early Bronze Age cemetery. Its strange shape is due to the fact that 19th century drovers tended to chip off small pieces to act as lucky charms – they believed it kept the Devil at bay!



### **The Whispering Knights:**

These are the remains of a burial chamber of an early or middle Neolithic portal dolmen lying 400 metres east of the King's Men. This 5000+ year old burial chamber, dates therefore to around 4000-3500 B.C. . *A dolmen (also known as cromlech (Welsh), anta, Hünengrab, Hunebed, Goindol, quoit, and portal dolmen) is a type of single-chamber megalithic tomb, usually consisting of three or more upright stones supporting a large flat horizontal capstone (table). Most date from the early Neolithic period (4000 to 3000 BC). Dolmens were usually covered with earth or smaller stones to form a barrow, though in many cases that covering has weathered away, leaving only the stone "skeleton" of the burial mound intact.*

In 1764, William Stukeley visited the site and saw the remains of a round barrow, now ploughed or eroded away.

Four standing stones of the “Whispering Knights” survive, forming a chamber about 2 square metres in area around a fifth recumbent stone, probably the collapsed roof capstone.

They were named “The Whispering Knights” because they lean inwards towards each other somewhat conspiratorially - as if plotting against their king.

