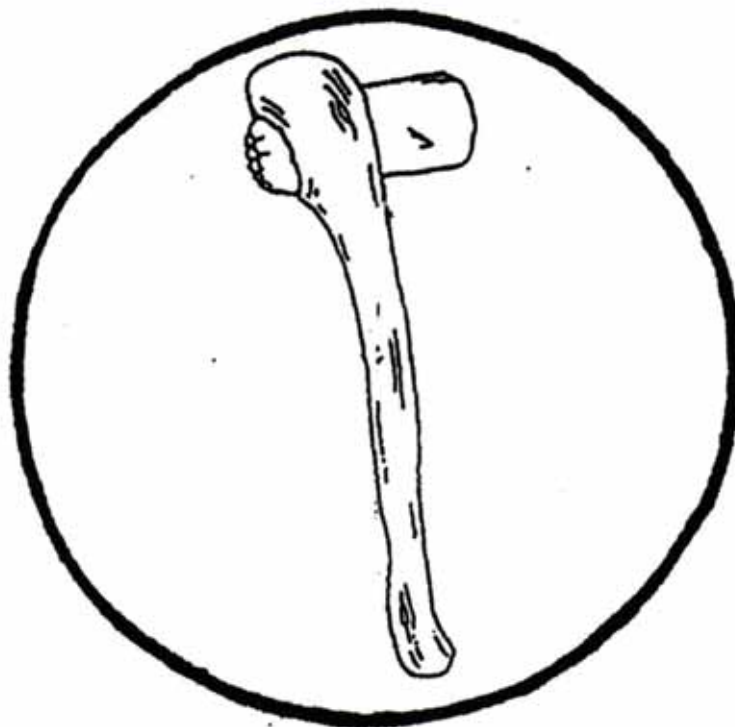


THE ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER
Spring 2011

- 1 AGM Report 2010
- 2 Ken Payne - A Tribute
- 2 HCC Rights of Way
- 3 The Hill
- 4 Norton common
- 4 Walking in Herts
- 5 Suffolk Snippets
- 5 Web-site
- 6 An apology
- 6 Wardens & Committee

2010 AGM AT HADSTOCK

About 10 of us gathered at the village hall in Hadstock ready for the traditional morning walk, this year led for us by James Quantrill, with help from a friendly local resident who turned up to join us. Hadstock is quite a small place and it didn't take long for our group to leave the environs of the village and set off eastwards on paths which took us on to Chalky Road, a very pleasant green lane leading downhill into the outskirts of Linton.



Icknield Way members on Chalky Lane, Hadstock

After crossing the old railway line, we followed a track westwards to the Hadstock road where we turned left and uphill again to find the long bridleway carrying the Icknield Way Path from Burtonwood Farm. This we followed until a field boundary path led us back towards Hadstock where some folk found the pub which sold only beer, no food!

A few more members joined us for the afternoon meeting where the conventional reports were given and we were reassured that our finances were in good order. However, the Association's secretary and treasurer told the meeting that they will be standing down from the committee at the 2011 AGM and members were asked to consider the Association's future if replacements cannot be found.

Finally, before everyone went on their way home, they enjoyed the traditional tea and cake.

AGM minutes and a letter regarding the future of the IWA are included to all paying members with this mailing.

**THE AGM IN 2011 WILL BE HELD ON
SATURDAY 9TH OCTOBER
AT WALLINGTON NEAR BALDOCK, HERTS
Meet at Wallington Village Hall at 10am**

Ken Payne - A Tribute

IWA members will be sad to hear of the death of Ken Payne earlier this year. Many of you will remember him as the first secretary and very keen supporter who, with others, helped establish the Icknield Way walkers' route during the early 1980s.

Ken was invited to the first meeting of the association's Steering Committee, held in November 1983, in his capacity as Chairman of the North Herts Group of the Ramblers' Association. He had long been concerned about the neglect of rights-of-way in his adopted county of Hertfordshire and was an active campaigner for the proper care of our countryside access heritage. He was a thorough and diligent investigator of path problems and not afraid to worry away at those problems until 'something had been done'.

He was therefore just the person to help the Association in its mission to establish a publicised and promoted path along a historic route across five counties. Elected as the Association's secretary at its first AGM in October 1985, Ken continued in this busy role until his retirement in 1998. He provided back-up to those involved in producing our guide books, made repeated representations to the then Countryside Commission in support of the Association's appeal for National Trail status for the Icknield Way as well as ensuring that routine but important paperwork was kept in meticulous order.

Ken continued campaigning for rights-of-way until just before he died. Even though he could no longer get out much and walk the paths due to failing health, he carried on writing letters to the powers that be. Only recently, he was trying to obtain evidence of use of the path adjacent to the Roman camp at Wilbury Hill, Letchworth, so that it can be permanently protected as part of the Icknield Way.

Thank you, Ken.

More evidence of path use needed - Please help if you can!

Helen Denton at Herts County Council writes:

At present I'm dealing with an application to record that part of the Icknield Way that lies between Westmill Lane in Ickleford and the Hexton Road. This part of the route currently exists on our highway records as an unclassified county road, but if we record it on the Definitive Map it obviously has a higher legal protection, so we can make sure it is always open and available for use; and would also take on responsibility for its maintenance.

The problem is that it looks as though it was accidentally stopped up under the enclosure of Pirton in 1811 (the private act of Parliament did not contain the necessary powers) so I'm trying to find subsequent evidence of its rededication through public use. I was wondering if you knew anyone who walked that part of the route regularly, and had done for a while, so that I could ask them to complete a user evidence form for me.

It would be extremely useful to us if we could find evidence of use of the route. Clearly many people use it on a regular basis, but unfortunately we need physical, written evidence of this to rely upon. Thanks in advance for your assistance. If anyone has any queries please feel free to direct them to me.

Regards Helen Denton
Definitive Map Officer
Rights of Way Service
CHN103
Tel 01992 555286 www.hertsdirect.org/row

The Hill

I wonder how many of Linton's 3,000 or so residents have climbed Rivey Hill. Quite a few I suspect but many more will have not even thought of it.

I am writing this because it is probably my most favourite area in Linton simply because it offers such beautiful views of the village and surrounding countryside and serious history.

Walk over the hill and you are following in the footsteps of our long gone ancestors, the ancient Britons who roamed these parts well before the Romans thought of invading Britain.

The bridleway alongside the British Telecom exchange in Back Road is still part of Icknield Way, the great road of prehistory. It is believed to have run for 363 miles from Lyme Regis on the south coast to Hunstanton on the Wash. Long distance walkers regularly use 100 or so miles of the Way between Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire and Norfolk's Knettishall Heath - and the route goes right through Linton via the recreation ground.

The history is shrouded in the mists of time, and the first definite mention comes in 903AD with mention of the four great roads in Britain, Ermine Street, Fosse Way, Watling Street and Icknield Way. Apparently Edward the Confessor believed the routes were so important he issued a royal charter giving travellers protection on all four roads.

So if you want to walk in the footsteps of your ancestors and enjoy the magnificent views from several vantage points, there are three ways of getting to the top. The first is via the Balsham Road and up the unmade road just before the entrance to Chilford Hall. The road is private but as well as being part of the Icknield Way, it is also a bridlepath and quite in order to walk up, or ride if you own a horse. This is the best route to take if the weather has been wet or in the winter, as the other two paths can become quite slippery and muddy.

The second way up is often the most difficult of the walks, but probably the easiest to from the centre of the village as the path begins on Back Road next to the Cemetery. Unfortunately a number of springs on the way up often leave the path very wet, but in good weather it takes you to the water tower. Views to the Bartlow Road end of Linton and across towards Balsham are certainly worthwhile.

The third route is the continuation of Icknield Way from the recreation ground. It climbs straight up from the BT exchange. At the top, as the bridlepath veers north east towards the Balsham Road, there is a seat kindly put there by the W.I. some years ago and recently restored thanks to Camgrain.

The outlook from there is absolutely stunning to the South and the West. Perch on the seat - it is quite high - and just imagine that this would be the view the ancient Britons' had of the Granta valley as they herded their cattle and sheep on this great road.

Of course now our village can be seen nestling comfortably down below, sheltered from the worst North winds by Rivey Hill, but in a way not much has changed. In past days farmers would have looked back as they made the climb, and almost certainly there would be plumes of smoke rising from the valley. For this was a place that early man settled, with forestry supplying large amounts of wood, plenty of grassy areas, and clear water available from the Granta.

At least that is how I imagine it!

Mike Gee

NORTON COMMON

A Letchworth Nature reserve

Norton Common lies adjacent to the Icknield Way and is proof that, although our walker's route through Letchworth is along one of the most urban stretches, a green and pleasant land is not too far away even in a town.

The Common was once entirely rural and included both arable land and grazing common. Evidence of its former use can be found in areas of undulating 'ridge-and-furrow' ground now covered in grassland and parkland plantings. Ridge and furrow was produced by ploughing furrows in the same direction each year so that soil eventually moved into ridges. This was before the development of the reversible plough which could plough in the same direction across the whole field, thus keeping the land level.

In the 18th century, the land was enclosed and hedges planted to divide the fields. However, commoners continued to graze their livestock, keeping grassy areas open and providing good habitat for a wide range of species. By the end of the 19th century, grazing had declined, scrub had taken over and much of the area's characteristic wildlife had gone.

In 1903, the Common was incorporated into the design of the world's first garden city at Letchworth. Paths were cleared through the scrub, a lido was constructed for the people of the town and other facilities added as the years passed.

Today, the Common comprises 63 acres of mixed woodland, scrub, parkland and grassland where paths meander. Interesting and locally important wildlife habitats still survive including an area of marshy grassland created by springs seeping through impermeable boulder clay. Here in summer you can find marsh orchids, meadow cranesbill and several species of dragonfly. Old meadow land north of the swimming pool still supports cowslips, lady's bedstraw, harebells and wild carrot.

The nature reserve is managed by North Herts District Council in partnership with a local Friends group and, in recent years, a great deal of conservation work has helped to restore some of the habitats in this attractive and peaceful place. If time permits when on your walk along the Way, Norton Common is worth stopping at to eat your picnic – and even spot a black squirrel!

Chris

James

For more information, go to:

www.north-herts.gov.uk/norton_common_nature_reserve_leaflet.pdf.

Walking in Herts www.walkinginherts.co.uk

is a website packed with useful information for walkers.

With more than 150 walks to download and print free, details of around 100 guided walks every month, it also has books of walks, contact details for all the walking groups in the county and much more. Whether you want to walk on your own or with a group all the information is there in one place.

Now, after three years hard work, local man John Harris has taken the concept Countrywide. Walking in England www.walkinginengland.co.uk has thousands of walks to download and print – and all free of charge!

SUFFOLK SNIPPETS.

Shelterhouse Corner to Barrows Corner.

On Page 60 of the 5th Edition of the Walkers' Guide will be found a description and map of the Icknield Way Path route between these two points. This section of about 1 km includes a right-angled bend, whilst the OS map Explorer map shows a broken line, coincidentally the District Boundary, running diagonally across fields, linking the points and marked 'Icknield Way in Gothic script.

Some 35 years ago, John Andrews, who had noticed that there was a 'large black hole' in the Definitive Map for Suffolk in the areas close to the Norfolk border occupied by large country estates, set about discovering why! His research led to the discovery of a network of historic routes, 'omitted' when the Definitive Map was prepared in the early 1950s and, following a series of public enquiries in the 1990s, many of these were added,, enabling the IWP route to be amended, avoiding a long walk alongside the busy A134 road.

Still outstanding, however, was the short cross-field length described above, but we learned from John in November that, following the publication of an Order, a two-stage public enquiry and a wait of two years, the Order had been confirmed.

Nothing is yet visible on site and it remains to be seen whether the landowner will be seeking a diversion, perhaps along a field boundary, but one day consideration may have to be given to a further amendment to our route.

John Andrews is now living in Scotland but is far from retired, retaining his interest in Suffolk together with new challenges north of the border.

Knettishall Heath Country Park

To those of us who have walked the whole of the Icknield Way Path, arrival at Knettishall Heath Country Park gives cause for celebration and, indeed, thoughts of continuing northwards on the Peddars Way to the North Norfolk coast or eastwards on the Angles Way to Great Yarmouth, 'perhaps next year'. It is no surprise that the park is described as 'the hub of Long Distance Paths in the region'.

Like all local authorities, Suffolk County Council is anxious to reduce its costs and amongst the many cuts proposed is the management of the numerous country parks, including Knettishall, picnic areas, railway walks etc. currently under its control, sooner rather than later. At Knettishall the perception is that another body, perhaps a trust, will come forward to run, or even acquire, the site, which will continue to be available for public use.

Facilities at the park include a toilet block some distance from the IWP and the Peddars Way, together with ample parking controlled by a barrier.

A list of potential 'operators' is currently on the SCC website but, at the time of writing, I am unaware of any decision.

Phil Prigg

The Web-site

A reminder of the address: www.icknieldwaypath.co.uk

Sue Prigg has spent some very useful time on the Association's behalf sorting out some anomalies on the web-site and bringing it under the full control of the committee. It is now possible for her to directly add material including 'hot of the press' items.