



RIVEY HILL AT LINTON – ONE MAN’S VIEW

I wonder how many of Linton’s 3000 or residents have climbed Rivey Hill. Quite a few, I suspect, but many more will not even have thought about it, despite the fact that, at 112 metres, it is one of the highest points for miles around in this part of Cambridgeshire.

I am writing this because it is probably my favourite area of Linton. It offers not only beautiful views over the village and surrounding countryside but also an opportunity to walk into some 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 considered invading Britain.

The bridleway alongside the BT exchange in Back Road is still part of the Icknield Way, one of the great roads of history. It is believed to have followed open country for 363 miles from Lyme Regis on the Dorset coast to Hunstanton on the Wash. Long distance walkers follow the hundred or so miles of the Way between Ivinghoe Beacon in the Chilterns and Knettishall Heath, on the borders of Suffolk and Norfolk – and this route passes right through Linton - across the recreation ground.

The history of the Way is shrouded in the mists of time but the four great highways of Britain are first mentioned in 903AD – Ermine Street, Fosse Way, Watling Street and the Icknield Way. Apparently Edward the Confessor believed the routes were so important that he issued a royal charter giving travellers protection along all four of these routes.

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 by following the Balsham road out of Linton and then the bridleway leading off it just before the entrance to Chilford Hall. This is the route of the Icknield Way path leading north-east off the hill and is guaranteed to be dry if the weather has been wet, but care is needed when walking along the road.

The second way up is the most straight-forward from the centre of the village. It starts on Back Road next to the cemetery. Unfortunately, a number of springs on the way often make the path very spongy and harder walking but, in good weather, the route leads you straight

to Rivey Hill's water tower, past Rivey Wood. Views south-east towards Bartlow and north along the Way towards Balsham are certainly worthwhile.

The third route is that taken by the Icknield Way Path from the recreation ground. It climbs straight up from the BT exchange. At the top, where the bridleway turns east, is a seat placed there by the WI some years ago and recently restored with the help of a donation from Camgrain. The outlook from the seat to the south and west is absolutely stunning. Sitting here, it is quite possible to imagine that this would have been the view that our ancient forbears would have had over the wide and marshy Granta valley as they herded their animals over the high ground along 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 have been plumes of smoke rising from the valley. For this was a place settled early by man, having supplies of wood and timber on the heavier land above the valley, plenty of grazing for livestock and permanent supplies of water from the river.

At least, that's how I imagine it!

Mike Gee, Icknield Way News Spring 2011