



# NEWSLETTER

## AUTUMN 2015

### ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

## AGM 2015

### CHRISHALL

(north-west Essex, not at Great Chishill, as previously advertised!))

### Saturday 3rd October

Meet at Chrishall Village Hall, formerly the Methodist Chapel, at Crawley End for a walk along the Icknield Way starting at 10.30am.

Re-convene at Hall at 2pm for the afternoon meeting

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Chrishall	2
Circular Walks	2
The Ridgeway Partnership	2
Exploring the King's Forest	3
West Stow Country Park	3
New A5 / M1 Link Road	4
Fancy a Walk?	4
A Message from the Chairman	5
New Footbridge at Ickleford	5
Voluntary Route Wardens	6
Icknield Way Committee	6

Another year has passed since our thirtieth AGM was celebrated at Balsham last year. The Icknield Way Path continues to be enjoyed by many people, a few of whom we hear from via our website but many we don't. Sometimes we receive complimentary comments about our wonderfully tranquil and peaceful route undulating gently along the chalk hills. Just occasionally someone will tell us about a problem somewhere—a tree blocking the path, a missing sign post or faded waymark—but generally speaking we believe that the Icknield Way Path is in reasonable order along its 110 miles.

We like to hear from our voluntary route wardens. A regular update, ideally twice a year, telling us that all is well is always reassuring! We hope to see most of you at AGMs where issues of common concern can be aired. Most of our wardens are well connected to the rights-of-way network: they usually know where to report problems and prompt help of county council highway authorities is much appreciated.

Another reprint of the sixth edition of our Walkers' Guidebook will be needed very soon reflecting steady sales. Always available via the website, a copy would make an excellent gift for new friends or colleagues who have yet to discover the delights of the Icknield Way!

And don't forget to check our website from time to time for updates about the route and news items. Sue Prigg would be delighted to receive photos of the route or special features along it for the gallery, or news items concerning the Path where you are.

[www.icknieldwaypath.co.uk](http://www.icknieldwaypath.co.uk)

Editor

### The Icknield Way Path A Walkers' Guide Sixth Edition



110 miles along the 'oldest road in Britain' linking the Ridgeway Path to the Peddars Way following footpaths close to the ancient route

The Icknield Way Association

## NEW TREASURER STILL NEEDED

The Icknield Way Association still needs a Treasurer to replace John Boardman who will be standing down at the forthcoming AGM. The accounts are in excellent order, the Association is not handling huge amounts of money and the annual transactions are not complicated.

*Please get in touch if you can help us  
or if you think you know someone who can!*

# CHRISHALL

Chrishall parish has the distinction of including the highest point in Essex (and in East Anglia) within its boundaries. This lies at 147m in the far south of a very thin parish. From here, the land slopes downhill gently northwards to about 77m on the boundary close to Chrishall Grange in Cambridgeshire.

In common with many villages along this part of the Icknield Way, the boulder clay plateau facilitates the collection and holding of water and the numerous ponds around the central part of the village probably helped to supply this vital requisite of early settlement. Chrishall was recorded in the Domesday Book—so there was probably a settlement here long before this.

The village has remained small and population figures have not changed a great deal. In fact there are fewer people living here now (about 450) than in 1841 (518). The lack of nearby main roads has helped to protect the village from modern development, creating a very pleasant rural location.

Our Icknield Way Path arrives in Chrishall from Heydon, a short distance to the west. The historic Icknield Way follows a line parallel to and south of the surfaced and very busy A505 dual carriageway along the drier chalk ground, between Chrishall village and the wetter ground of the Fens to the north. But, as in other places, the IWA chose to lead walkers on off-road paths and through attractive villages where shops and pubs are an important source of refreshments on long walks.

Chrishall is blessed with an award-winning pub, the Red Cow, as well as other local businesses including several farms, a plumber, a blacksmith, a photographer, a caterer and a tree surgeon. There is also a farmhouse bed and breakfast establishment not far off our route.

Going eastwards on the Icknield Way Path the route follows a footpath to Elmdon but to the south of this path, a parallel track called Parkhouse Lane is known locally as the Icknield Way. It is good to see that the parish website includes useful publicity about the Icknield Way!



Parkhouse Lane, Chrishall (Photo: Chrishall Parish Council)

Finally, a historical snippet. Chrishall is the childhood home of Matilda, wife and queen of King Stephen. She was the daughter of Count Eustace of Boulougne who was given Chrishall by King William after the Norman Conquest. Apparently Matilda never forgot the village where she grew up and commanded that the people should always be well looked after.

## CIRCULAR WALKS

Committee members are gradually reviewing a series of circular walks starting and finishing with the Icknield Way. Several other well-known trails are ahead of the game here and have already published their own circular walks. This is a very good idea because it helps encourage people who are not committed long-distance walkers, or who do not have blocks of time at their disposal, to enjoy walking trails in bite-sized chunks. There are some wonderful sections of the Way which would make ideal half-day or full-day walks. We hope in time to make these circular walks available as downloads from the Icknield Way website.

If any of our members have a favourite walk incorporating a section of the Icknield Way they would like to suggest, please send the details to Sue Prigg (address on back page).



## THE RIDGEWAY PARTNERSHIP

The Ridgeway Partnership is now up and running. The formalities were completed on 27<sup>th</sup> March, when the old, joint Ridgeway and Thames Path group wound itself up, and the new Ridgeway Partnership came into being, adopting a Partnership Agreement, a Delivery Framework approved by Natural England and a Development and Promotion Strategy. Ian Ritchie was elected as Chairman. The formal launch took place on 19th June.

Sarah Wright has been appointed as the new Ridgeway Officer. Sarah has several years experience working in the region so is already known to many local people and organisations—and has an excellent working knowledge of the natural, historical and cultural background of the Ridgeway.

We wish Sarah a very happy and productive time in her new job.

Sarah Wright  
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 810224  
[Ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk)



# EXPLORING THE KING'S FOREST IN BRECKLAND

A short spell of beautiful sunny and warm weather in mid July provided an opportunity to explore a small part of the King's Forest between Bury St Edmunds and Thetford. Well and truly within Icknield Way country! Our exploration was on foot but this area offers some wonderful tracks for riding bikes or horses and, co-incidentally, whilst checking out other websites ready for the weekend trip I found a very useful leaflet published by Suffolk County Council.

Entitled 'King's Forest Cycle Rides', the leaflet describes two riding routes through forest, over heathland and around farmland. Both start from West Stow Country Park, cover 13 miles and include only gentle rises and falls. As a walker I would probably prefer to deviate from a straight-line route from time to time but for a cyclist these routes are ideal.

[www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/assets/Horse-Riding/Kings-Forest-Rides-for-web.pdf](http://www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/assets/Horse-Riding/Kings-Forest-Rides-for-web.pdf)

The Heathland Trail is subtitled 'Oases of Calm' and, unless your visit happens to coincide with a day when forestry gangs are harvesting, you are unlikely to find a more peaceful area, especially when following the Icknield Way through the centre of the Forest. The cyclists route initially takes the busy A1101 towards Icklingham but walkers following the Icknield Way Path can avoid this by using our parallel route via Weatherhill Farm before turning north up a byway called Seven Trees Road towards Dead Man's Grave. This spot is allegedly the burial place of an executed highwayman who, in revenge at being denied a Christian burial, now haunts the mound on a horse, scaring everyone who passes by! More importantly today, Deadman's Grave, along with nearby Berner's and Horn Heaths are special areas where the characteristic wildlife of Breckland can be found. (NB. at certain times of the year, open access land here is closed to prevent disturbance to ground nesting birds.)

The trail continues northeast to a junction from where the Elveden Monument can be clearly seen. Turning east, the track meets with the Icknield Way at Shelterhouse Corner before turning south along it through the forest. After three miles, you arrive back at West Stow.

The second trail explores around the eastern half of the King's Forest. Starting again at West Stow, the route leads first up the long 'Weststow Road' through the forest to Shelterhouse Corner before turning south east and then south around the eastern perimeter of the forest, thus allowing more open views over farmland as well as into the forest along its wide tracks.



A wide track (ride) in the King's Forest. (Photo: Chris James)  
The grassy 'verges' are full of wild flowers and butterflies.

To some visitors, the seemingly solid ranks of conifers can present a dismal, and even threatening impression but many parts of the forest today are being 're-profiled' to allow areas of more natural vegetation to return. In wet and gloomy weather, it could be argued that the forest is not the best place to be but when the sun shines and the weather is warm, the forest presents its most attractive character. Even when there is apparently no breeze, the trees continually whisper to each other and, on a really hot day, the resins of the pines produce a characteristic aroma like nothing else. Different wild flowers seem to grow in each forest ride according to the subtle differences in soils, sunshine and shade and it is worth taking a wild flower guidebook with you on your walk in the Kings Forest to help you enjoy what you see.

All of the King's Forest is public access land. The tracks are laid out in a grid so, as long as you 'keep track' of your left and right turns, you will not get lost!

## WEST STOW COUNTRY PARK

West Stow Country Park is a great place to take family and grandchildren to discover life as it might have been in Anglo-Saxon England. Its re-constructed village is imaginatively laid out and there is a regular programme of events and workshops. With a further 125 acres of lakes, heaths, woodlands and trails (in addition to the King's Forest) to explore freely there is plenty to do. Parking costs only £2 per day and the Angles Café serves good food.

[www.weststow.org](http://www.weststow.org)



Viper's Bugloss—a typical plant of Breckland (Photo: Chris James)



## NEW A5 / M1 LINK ROAD —UPDATE

A new road is being built linking the A5 and the new M1 junction north of Houghton Regis. The IW guidebook has this area covered by map 3 & 4. South of this new road the 'former green belt' land is being developed for housing and industrial/commercial use. (There is a "promise" that development will not occur north of the new road.) Currently the Icknield Way path runs right through the middle of what will become housing.

I first become involved in this proposal ten years ago and even at that time Highways England were proposing two bridges over the new road, one of which is intended to carry the Icknield Way Path. More detailed proposals for housing & commercial developments have now started to emerge. Plans make allowance for roads and green space, but the Icknield Way does not feature greatly. This section of the Icknield Way Path does not follow a historic route: it was created before my involvement and was intended to take the path into countryside rather than through the conurbations of Dunstable and Luton. But now the conurbation is going to engulf more of the countryside! So over the next few years we will need to consider where the most appropriate route for the Icknield Way path should be in future.

The plan hopefully illustrates the principle issues. The A5 is on the left running north-south. The A5120 is on the right, also running north-south. Linking the two is the new A5-M1 link road with new roundabouts at each junction. The link road continues east to join with a new junction 11A on the M1. The link road was deemed to be essential to divert traffic out of Dunstable and provide access to this new development. Not shown clearly on this plan is proposal for new industrial/commercial development near the A5 and north of the existing IW path.

There are several possible options for where the route might go in the future. I have highlighted two that occur to me to prompt some debate.

The blue line shows a route which would take the path along green corridors and new estate roads through new housing development to a new bridge over the new road. It would then go across a field to an existing bridleway along the field edge to re-join the current route. The alternative red route follows north from Chalk Hill beside the A5 (which is on an embankment at this point) through proposed industrial units, then following an existing bridleway across the Thorn road (using a proposed 'toucan' crossing), then north again past housing to the other new bridge, then across a field on a farm track to the existing field edge path. The red route from the A5 to Thorn turn is a bridleway and the intention is to upgrade the remainder to bridleway to form the route of the Icknield Way riders route.

We are also arguing for a formal crossing of the A5 at Chalk Hill. Highways England have always resisted this, but provision of the new link road will result in the 'de-trunking' of the A5 south through Dunstable which then becomes the responsibility of Central Bedfordshire who, subject to finance, may be more receptive to providing a crossing!

If anyone is familiar with the area and has views on the issues / alternatives I have highlighted, I would be pleased to hear from you.

Tom Chevalier [Tom@Chevalier.me.uk](mailto:Tom@Chevalier.me.uk)

## FANCY A WALK?

**Saturday 24 October**  
**Pegsdon Hills, Herts/Beds**  
7 mile circular morning walk.  
Meet at the 'Live & Let Live' PH



Robert Cato  
01582 580855  
North Herts Ramblers

**Wednesday 16 December**  
**Dunstable Downs, Bedfordshire**

6.5 mile circular morning walk  
Meet at Chilterns Gateway Centre



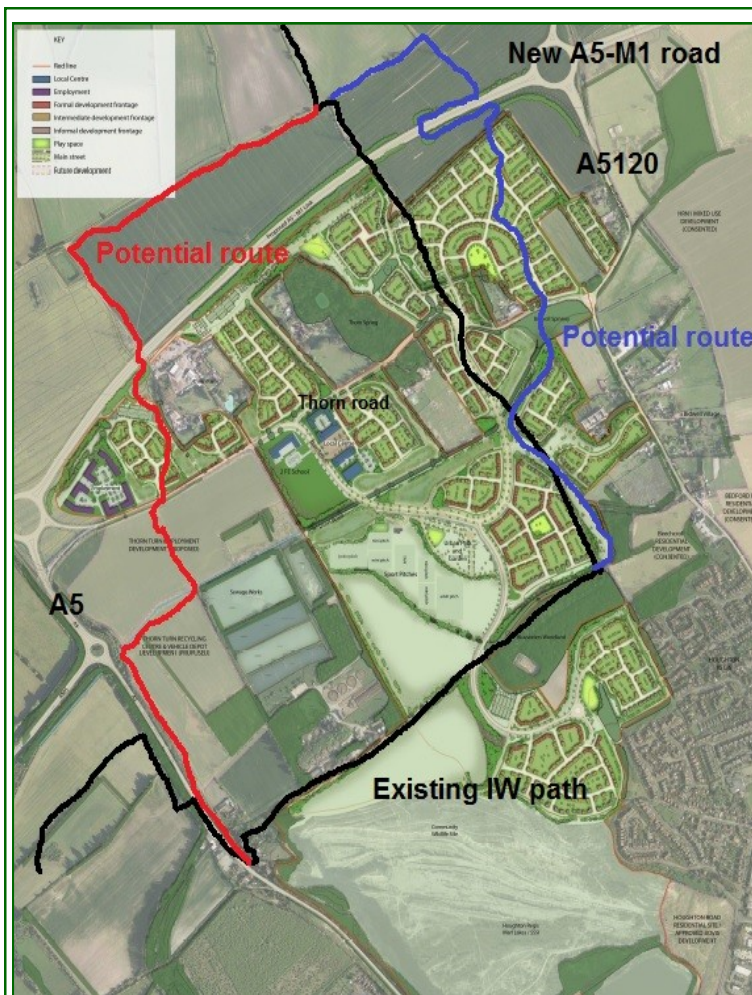
Carol  
01582 882628  
Ivey Valley Walkers

**Wednesday 6 January**  
**West Wrating, Cambs**

6 mile circular morning walk via  
Weston Colville along IW path.  
Meet at recreation ground TL603524



David G  
01223 893674  
Newmarket Ramblers





## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I was elected chairman in 2011 at a time when the IWA was in danger of collapsing due to lack of support. At this time, thankfully, I and a number of others notably Lesley, John and Gil stepped forward to join Chris, Sue and Phil on the committee and that has enabled the IWA to continue. We have also found more volunteers to add to the dedicated band of wardens who keep an eye on the 110 miles of the route. So to all of you, thank you for your on-going support.

As you might have guessed this is followed by a *however*.... John has acted in the role of treasurer since 2011 and gave the committee good notice of his intention to cease as treasurer at the forthcoming AGM but at the time of writing we have not found a replacement. So if anyone would like to step forward, the committee would be pleased to hear from you.

We are also keen to hear from anyone else who would like to join the committee. It helps the small band of willing committee members if there is a larger group of active participants so the work can be spread more widely. Whatever skills you have I am sure we could use them in a positive way for the Icknield Way. We generally meet only twice a year and at the AGM so it is not a massive commitment.

Finally I would like to apologise. When I became chairman I explained that I ran my own business and had a family, both of which were going to be a priority over the Icknield Way. Despite my best intentions over the past year, the Icknield Way has been squeezed out of time by various work and family commitments. I have not therefore been able to focus on Icknield Way related issues to anywhere near the level I would have liked. There are a whole host of aspects that I would like to progress related to the Icknield Way such that it becomes very frustrating to see the opportunities but unable to find sufficient time to move them forward.

So if anyone wants to step forward as chairman then I would not be upset. But, as I suspect there is no-one jumping to take on the role I am willing to continue and try harder next year!

Tom Chevalier

*Tom—we would be more than delighted if you will continue as our Chairman!*

*Editor*



## NEW FOOTBRIDGE AT ICKLEFORD

Alex Goldie, our voluntary route warden at Ickleford reports the following news:

At last, a new footbridge over the River Hiz at Ickleford has been provided by Hertfordshire County Council. The ford had long since fallen out of use and the landowner constructed his own bridge to allow farm vehicle access on to his land. However, although the bridge was not strictly on the line of the right-of-way, everyone had been using it for many years, there being no alternative to crossing the river. Any claims for injury have always been pretty unlikely to pass through legal channels!

So now the new bridge is open and since the photo was taken, the gaps between concrete ramp and timber decking have been filled.

Ickleford Parish Council have requested that additional protection be added along the ramps to prevent small children falling off in to the river.

*Thanks to Alec for this report and for his photo showing work in progress*



# VOLUNTARY ROUTE WARDENS

Maps 1-3	Ivinghoe Beacon to A5	Helen Fletcher-Rogers	hfrogers@dial.pipex.com
Maps 4, 33-34	A5 to Sundon Hills Country Park	Tom Chevalier	tom@chevalier.me.uk
Maps 5,6	Sundon Hills to Hexton-Lilley Rd	Carol Bond	carol.bond@hotmail.com
Map 7	Lilley Road to Pirton	Lesley Blundell	lesleyblundell@btinternet.com
Map 8-9	Pirton to Wilbury Hill	Alex Goldie	kathy_alex.goldie@mac.com
Map 10	Wilbury Hill to Baldock	Chris James	chrisjames56@btinternet.com
Maps 11-15	Baldock town centre to Heydon	David Allard	david.allard@ntlworld.com
Maps 16-19	Heydon to Linton	James Quantrill	01279 653899
Maps 20-21	Linton to Willingham Green	Clarissa Cochran	clarissa@clarissacochran.com
Maps 22-27	Willingham Green to Icklingham	Phil Prigg	phil@prigg.co.uk
Maps 28-29	Icklingham to D-house	Tom & Gill Caple	gill.caple@btinternet.com
Maps 30-32	D-house to Knettishall Heath	Edward Wortley	ewortley@tiscali.co.uk
Maps 35-36	Thetford Link	Mike Gee	ramblergees@hotmail.co.uk

# ICKNIELD WAY COMMITTEE

## Chairman: Tom Chevalier

22 Byfield Close, Toddington, Dunstable, LU5 6BH.  
(01525 873986)

tom@chevalier.me.uk

## Secretary: Lesley Blundell

7 Church Street, Shillington, Nr Hitchin, SG5 3LH.  
(01462 711530)

lesleyblundell@btinternet.com

## Treasurer (until AGM 2015): John Boardman

11 Green End Road, Sawtry, Huntingdon, PE28 5UX.  
(01487 831937)

john@windgather.com

## Editor: Chris James

56 Back Street, Ashwell, Baldock, SG7 5PE.  
(01462 742684)

chrisjames56@btinternet.com

## Website, Membership and Guide Book Sales: Sue Prigg

1 Edgeborough Close, Kentford, Newmarket, CB8 8QY  
(01638 751289)

sue@prigg.co.uk

## Independent Accounts Examiner: David Allard

david.allard@ntlworld.com

## Committee Member: Phil Prigg

phil@prigg.co.uk