



NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2018

ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

AGM 2018

Saturday 13th October
Cassell Memorial Hall
West Street, Lilley LU2 8LH
2pm.

With morning walk starting from
the hall at **10.30am.**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Lilley	2
Invitation to AGM Talk	2
Can you Help (Wardens needed!)	2
Lilley Hoo	3
Chilterns Walking Festival	3
Dea Senuna—Ashwell's Goddess	4
Breckland Treasure	4
Fancy a Walk?	
North Chilterns Initiative	5
Going gently in Suffolk	5
Going further in Suffolk	5
Route Wardens	6
Committee Contacts	6
Stop Press!	6

Guide Book Sales

1,461 copies

Welcome to our autumn Newsletter. It brings an invitation to attend our Annual Walk and Meeting. This year we are holding the meeting towards the west end of the Trail because we are very pleased that Keith Hoffmeister of the Chiltern Society has agreed to talk to us about the threats of HS2 in this very special AONB.

*Please do make a special effort to attend —
we would love to see you!*

Elsewhere you can read about horse-racing in days gone by, the publication of an archaeological report, a walking festival, a new landscape initiative, places to explore in Suffolk and an ornithological treasure. Plenty of variety and hopefully something of interest to all our readers!



The Icknield Way Trail between Pegsdon and Offley

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome three new members who have joined the Association since the publication of the Spring Newsletter:

Nick & Claire Beale from Royston

Lorna Skinner from Derbyshire

LILLEY

Lilley is a small parish of around 750 hectares situated between Hitchin & Luton on the western border of Hertfordshire, adjoining the county of Bedford. The parish lies within the Chilterns Hills on land gradually rising from about 123m above sea level in the south to 184m at Telegraph Hill in the north. Already at the time of the Domesday Survey it was mainly arable, on fertile chalk soil. Today there is far more woodland, most of it having been planted as shelterbelts for either timber or sporting interests. There are several farms.

The village lies in the south of the parish, and, including a few outlying cottages in the north, extends about a mile along the main street running north-west from the A505 to the Icknield Way, which forms part of the parish boundary in the north. South of the A505, the village road runs for several miles in a south-easterly direction along a shallow valley known as Lilley Bottom.

Lilley Hoo is a prominent landscape feature on the north-east side of the village—a long and level plateau area once serving as a large common for the parish and also used for horse racing in the 18th century. (See more on this on page 3). The parish is well served with rights-of-way, many of which offer extensive views over Chiltern landscapes.



The Icknield Way near Lilley Hoo



The Icknield Way along a beautiful green lane below Telegraph Hill

CAN YOU HELP?

The Association is looking for keen walkers living in Suffolk who have a few hours to spare twice a year. After several years keeping an eye on the Thetford link of the Trail and on the wonderfully peaceful stretch between Icklingham and D-house, our wardens Tom & Gill Caple and Mike Gee are standing down. We thank them for all their help.

We are looking for people to replace them—and if you live in the right area and are interested (or know someone who does who could be enthused!), please do not hesitate to get in touch with Phil Prigg to find out more.



HOW WILL HS2 IMPACT THE CHILTERNs?

An illustrated talk to be given by Keith Hoffmeister

(The Chiltern Society)

at the AGM

13th October

2pm

All are welcome!

LILLEY HOO

In memory of Tony Northwood, a former member of the IWA and a (much missed) regular contributor of articles to the Newsletter, here is one of his especially atmospheric historical contributions which was published exactly ten years ago:

Until ploughed for the first time in 1946 for post-war food production, this two-mile tract of formerly fine-turfed grassland was a popular beauty spot that had long attracted trippers from the nearby towns of Luton and Hitchin. Summer weekends were particularly busy during the 1920's with cricket matches, picknickers, an Italian barrel-organ operator complete with monkey, a scissor grinder, traders in ice cream, oranges, sweets, muffins and crumpets.

Two centuries earlier, it had escaped a similar fate (that is, the ploughing) when it was specifically exempted from the 1768-9 parliamentary enclosure of Lilley, not for the sake of the commoners' grazing sheep but because, as ancient common land, it was in regular use as a racecourse popular with Hitchin gentry.

The first took place on Michaelmas Day 1693 for a plate of £30.00 (worth thousands of pounds at today's value) advertised by a notice in the London Gazette which required entries to be made the previous morning at the George Inn, Silsoe (a convenient route to Lilley across the Barton Hills probably then existed). A four-mile point-to-point, it was strictly for amateur riders: gentlemen rode their own horses and the results were not published.

Nevertheless, it was a sell-out and became an annual event for the next 105 years, extending over three days and with prizes up to 100 guineas. A regular participant was the dissolute (but then athletic) young tearaway, George, Prince of the Wales, who occasionally visited his 'Gentleman of the Stud' Emilius Henry Delmé.

A descendent of the Radcliffes of Hitchin Priory and Henry Howard, Earl of Carlisle, Delmé was passionate about matters of the turf and had transformed his Pirton residence, High Down House into a racing establishment, using Lilley Hoo as an exercise and training ground. Returning there on one particularly drunken occasion, he managed to smash every window at High Down.

In later years, George (now the fat Georgy Porgy of pudding and pie fame) would later become King George IV. After years of arable cultivation, Lilley Hoo is now a rather dull expanse of ordinary fields, having long ago lost its communities of colourful and delicate chalk plants along with their attendant butterflies. With some benign neglect and a resumption of grazing, it could be allowed to return to its former glory to expand on and complement the important nature reserves of the Barton and Pegsdon Hills.



6th—21st October

With more than 50 walks and activities taking place across the whole of The Chilterns AONB, the Chilterns Walking Festival is one of the biggest regional events of its kind. There is a huge range of events—something for all interests and abilities. To find out more and book for events, download the festival leaflet:

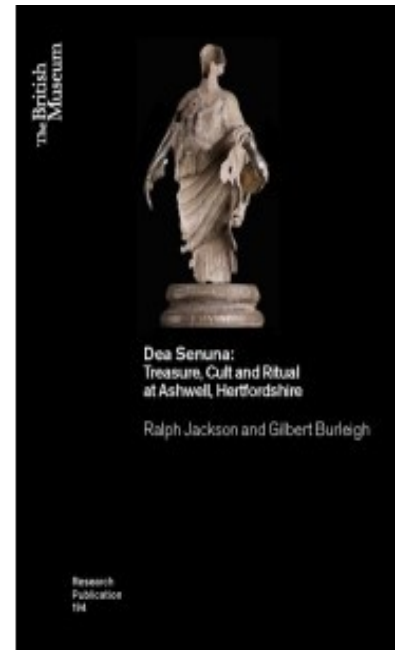
<https://www.visitchilterns.co.uk/uploads/ChilternsWalkingFest/CWF%20Oct%2018%20listings%20leaflet.pdf>

DEA SENUNA—ASHWELL'S GODDESS

Back in Autumn 2009, a brief article appeared in the Newsletter about an exciting archaeological investigation being carried out just north of Ashwell—a village on the Icknield Way located between Baldock and Royston. A metal detectorist had unearthed some interesting lumps of metal. Now, many years on and after several years of field excavations, cleaning of finds, extensive research and the resulting 'writing-up', the report on the shrine of Roman-British goddess Senuna and its significance to not only the immediate locality but also to our region has been published.

Research Publication 194 "Dea Senuna: Treasure, Cult and Ritual at Ashwell, Hertfordshire" is co-authored by Ralph Jackson and Gilbert Burleigh and published by the British Museum. Extending to over 360 pages, it is a magnificent and comprehensive report and catalogue of the hundreds of objects, including beautiful gold jewellery, votive plaques, pottery and coins.

<https://www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/dea-senuna.html>



BRECKLAND TREASURE

September is a glorious month for exploring just about anywhere in Britain but autumnal light and colour on our heaths and moors are a special treasure. One of my favourite stretches of the Icknield Way passes through the centre of one of Breckland's most important heathland nature reserves at Cavenham Heath.

During September each year, a special event takes place. Along with other heaths nearby, Cavenham becomes the setting-off point for one of Britain's rarest breeding birds as they return to Spain and north Africa to find winter warmth.

The Stone Curlew is a shy and reclusive bird which prefers bare, stony ground in which to lay its eggs. Its rarity means that its nesting areas are usually a secret closely-guarded by reserve wardens and farmers but in late summer and early autumn the adults and youngsters can often be seen more easily as they gather in small numbers ready for their departure.

About the size of a crow, the bird's cryptic plumage makes it very hard to see on its nesting areas. Their very large yellow eyes help them to see well in the dark—night-time is when they feed on insects. The Stone Curlew is truly one of the many natural treasures of Breckland and of the Icknield Way.

FANCY A WALK?

Sunday 6 January

Great Chishill, Cambridgeshire

11 miles, visiting high points of Cambs and Essex. Meet at village hall CP 10am. TL 427386



David G
01223 892374
Newmarket Ramblers

Wednesday 16 January

Hildersham, Cambridgeshire

6 miles Roman Road walk. Park with courtesy in High St near village hall at 10am. TL 544485



David G
01223 892374
Newmarket Ramblers



A Stone Curlew
(Photo: RSPB images)

NORTH CHILTERNNS INITIATIVE

The Chilterns Conservation Board is the body set up by the government to conserve and enhance the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and promote public awareness and understanding of the area.

Together with local partners (including local authorities, wildlife trusts, Natural England and other heritage and conservation organisations) proposals are being worked on for an ambitious community, wildlife and heritage initiative in the North Chilterns – ‘The North Chilterns Landscape Initiative’.

The urban areas of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis are surrounded by wonderful wildlife and nationally important Chilterns landscapes. Ancient trackways (including the Icknield Way) criss-cross the urban areas and link them to accessible countryside sites. These sites and access routes potentially provide a major recreational and health and wellbeing resource for communities. Residents of the area consider the environment a high priority but only a relatively small proportion of people from Luton get out and enjoy the countryside or learn about local heritage.



View over Dunstable from close to the Icknield Way where it comes down off The Downs—showing clearly the pressure of the expanding town on the landscape

At the same time, the countryside of the area is under enormous pressure. Housing and infrastructure development, changes in land management and recreational pressures are putting the unique wildlife and heritage of the area at risk. There are real needs and opportunities for many more people to get involved with initiatives to conserve and enhance what is left. There is a huge opportunity in the north Chilterns to bring people together to enjoy and engage with their local heritage. The Conservation Board believes the scheme they are working up can bring real benefits to local people and communities - not least in terms of health and well-being, skills training and supporting cohesive communities - as well as benefiting local wildlife and landscapes.

The proposed initiative is a 5-year £2.5m Heritage Lottery Funded scheme of five complementary projects which will encourage communities to work together in response to the challenges and opportunities facing the area.

The Board planned to submit the Stage 1 Bid during mid-August with the outcome expected by October.

GOING GENTLY IN SUFFOLK

Your trusty Editor was surfing the net for something else and found (as you do!) some useful leaflets for those who cannot perhaps walk long distances cross country—or who have youngsters learning to put one foot in front of the other . .

Suffolk County Council has published a series of Easy Access Trail guides, several of which encourage a gentle exploration of Icknield Way country:

Cavenham Heath

[www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/
assets/Walks/Easy-Going-Trails/
Cavenham.pdf](http://www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/assets/Walks/Easy-Going-Trails/Cavenham.pdf)

Knettishall Heath

[www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/
assets/Walks/Easy-Going-Trails/
Knettishall-Heath.pdf](http://www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/assets/Walks/Easy-Going-Trails/Knettishall-Heath.pdf)

Brandon Country Park

[www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/
assets/Walks/Easy-Going-Trails/
Brandon.pdf](http://www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/assets/Walks/Easy-Going-Trails/Brandon.pdf)

GOING FURTHER IN SUFFOLK!

On the other hand, for those who prefer to step it out and cover the miles there is also the **Brecks Trail**, a 14-mile linear route linking West Stow Country Park with Brandon Country Park and taking the explorer (on foot, bicycle or on horseback) through forests, heaths and farmland.

www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/the-brecks-trail/