



ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2019

AGM 2019

Saturday 12th October

**Gazeley Village Hall,
The Street, CB8 8RD**

2pm.

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

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The Association has now sold over 1600 copies of the 6th Edition of the Walkers' Guidebook. Minor updates can now be included in each reprint and there have been several route improvements over the last few years, so if you are planning to do walk and your guide book is very old, why not invest in a more up-to-date version?

Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter.

It comes with an invitation to all members and friends to attend our forthcoming Annual Walk and Meeting, to be held this year at Gazeley, an attractive village just east of Newmarket. As always, we expect good weather for the walk!



We may, or may not, see this beautiful old bridge—
but you will have to join us to find out!

Read on to learn more about a new landscape project in Suffolk, the important heritage along the Icknield Way, a festival in the Chilterns and walks you can do by train (!).

There is also a small selection of walks to consider, if you fancy exploring Icknield Way country new to you and a brief note about some conservation work done to rescue an important Icknield Way landmark on the Herts/Beds border. Lastly, and somewhat quirkily, three fungi to look out for in coming months!

Not forgetting a reminder that we still need voluntary route wardens at the east end of the route. If you have a few hours to spare twice a year and would like to help us, this is a very rewarding way to do it.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM!

Chris James

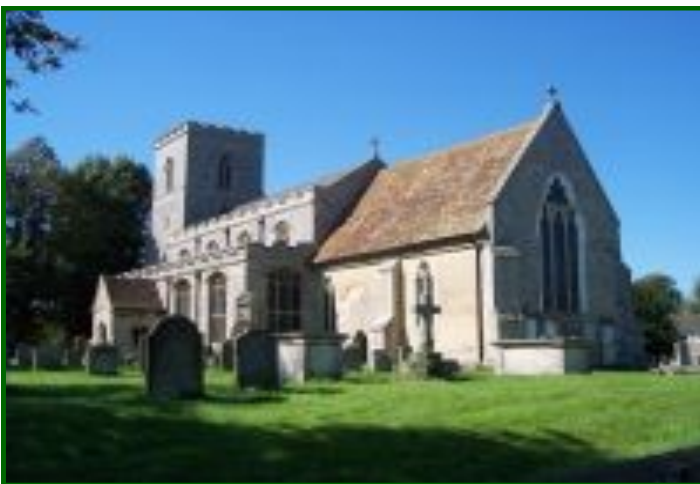
Editor

GAZELEY—a village near Newmarket

Gazeley is encountered on the Icknield Way path after Dalham but before crossing the A14 (that is, if you are walking from west to east!). The village lies approximately 5 miles from Newmarket and 10 miles from Bury St. Edmunds. Local folklore has it that the village is so called because "it gazes over Ely." In fact the name is of Anglo Saxon origin - *Gaseleia*. However, Ely Cathedral, "the Ship of the Fens", can indeed be clearly seen on the horizon, on a clear day, from the highest point (about 87m) on Moulton Road. But to catch a glimpse, a walker along the Icknield Way will need to have opted for the alternative route via Moulton—they would miss it if coming in from Dalham to the south.

Gazeley is located on a small 'plateau' above the valley of the River Kennet. At the time of the Domesday Book, it was known as Deslinga. William the Conqueror gave the Manor to one of his knights, Richard de Clare. The spelling of the village name was recorded as Gadesley in 1234 but by 1603 it had finally become Gazeley, through various combinations, including Gydisley and Gaysle.

All Saints' Church is a Grade 1 Listed church dating back to the early 14th Century. The church is located in a prominent position at the heart of the village and is the central church in a benefice of five villages.



The village hall was built in 1929, at a cost of £1,000, for Sir Laurence Philipps, later Lord Milford, who later donated it to the village.



Gazeley Village Hall—the venue for our AGM

There is limited parking at the Hall but there is space available along The Street, near the parish church.



The Street, Gazeley
Our Icknield Way 'finger' can just be seen on the signpost!

With grateful thanks to the Gazeley village website for information and photos included in this article

Our AGM walk will be led by local route warden Phil Prigg. Phil knows this area thoroughly and always makes his walks very enjoyable and interesting.

Do make every effort to join us at the Hall at 10.15 am ready for a 10.30 start.

Please note, however, that the Chequers pub in Gazeley has uncertain opening hours and is not serving food! ***So, bring a packed lunch to the AGM.***

CHILTERN'S HERITAGE FESTIVAL

By popular demand, the Chilterns Heritage Festival is returning for its second year. From 21st September until 6th October, there will be a series of exciting events across the region that are designed to celebrate the diverse heritage of the Chilterns. This is a festival of experiences that promises something for everyone to enjoy!

With exclusive visits to iconic Chiltern houses, historical open days, heritage walks and countless other special events, the festival will encourage participants to learn about local heritage and broaden its interest to the people who live both within the Chilterns and beyond. The Festival will bring together historic buildings, museums, landscapes and organisations charged with keeping the area's special heritage alive.

Walks include the following:

Monday 23rd September 10.15am—1.00pm

Ashridge History Walk.

Meet at Ashridge Estate Visitor Centre, Ringshall

Tuesday 24th September 10am—1pm

Whiteleaf Hill - Cross 'Spring' Clean and Walk

Meet at Whiteleaf Hill CP, Princes Risborough

For more information and to book go to:

<https://chilternsociety.org.uk/heritage-festival/#events>

WEBSITE UPDATES

Those familiar with the Icknield Way Path website will probably have discovered already that we have a 'partner' site for the Icknield Way Trail. In recent months, our Chairman, Tom Chevalier, has been gradually uploading an interactive map to the Trail website. This is all very clever stuff and shows not only the choice of routes along the Icknield Way but also the facilities (car parks, railway stations etc) and the vast number of 'attractions' such as heritage sites, nature reserves, museums, marvellous viewpoints, all shown with symbols so that they can be easily clicked on.

All this must have taken ages to create, so we should thank Tom for his strenuous efforts on the Association's behalf to increase the profile of the Icknield Way.

The website continues to be a work in progress, so do check it out from time to time: www.icknieldwaytrail.org.uk

The website for the walkers' route remains at:

www.icknieldwaypath.co.uk

LOOK OUT FOR FUNGI!

Autumn is here and there is no better time to keep a look out for fungi. The UK has several thousand species of all kinds of shapes, sizes, colours and forms—not merely those with stalks and caps like those we find in shops. Keep an eye open for the Parrot Waxcap, found



in (agriculturally) unimproved grassland in fields, churchyards, downland. For the next one, it is usually necessary to look up, as you are passing through beech woodlands. This is the Porcelain Fungus, only ever found on beech trees, usually ones that are decaying. Its



caps are almost translucent and it is often dripping with slimy moisture. Lastly, King Alfred's Cakes! Very common and usually on dead ash—with ash dieback disease now occurring everywhere, it should not be hard to find



this. It is also known as Cramp Balls, so could be useful to long-distance walkers! One is supposed to put them under a pillow overnight . . .

A NEW PROJECT FOR THE BRECKS

Exactly twenty years ago, the Autumn 1999 Newsletter reported on a new project to be established by a partnership of organisations in the unique area on the Suffolk/Norfolk borders known as the Brecks. Twenty years on, the 'Tracks in the Sand' project has gone through several variations with funding gained for different aspects, including the most recent 'Breaking New Ground Initiative' which ran from 2015-2018. The next project, to be called the **Brecks Fen Edge and Rivers Landscape Partnership (BFER)** looks set to attract more funding for five years and to start work in 2020.

The project area will focus on the Rivers Great and Little Ouse, the Wissey and the Lark and their various tributaries. Because of the irregular shape of the BFER area, the Icknield Way will 'interact' with it in a couple of places—in the Lark valley east of Mildenhall between Tuddenham and Icklingham, then again further north with the Little Ouse River at Euston and Knettishall Heath.

Currently, detailed information concerning project aims is not readily available but at a public engagement event earlier this year there were short presentations about the Brecks heritage and the many projects the BFER team is planning for the new scheme. These include a wide variety of river and 'pingo' restoration projects, as well as archaeological research, training, heritage crafts skills workshops and a whole host of other engagement activities for all ages.

It is hoped that IWA News can report progress in subsequent editions.

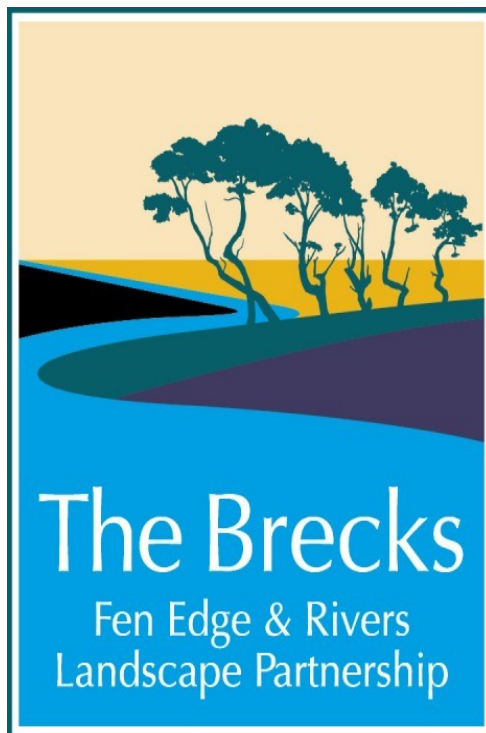
www.thebrecks.org is an interesting and attractive website giving a lot of general information about this fascinating area (including a mention of the **Icknield Way Path!**)

MID ANGLIA RAILWAY WALKS

For several years, IWA member Roger Wolfe has been devising and promoting some excellent walks linking railway stations on the Mid–Anglia line between Cambridge and Ipswich. Newmarket, Dullingham and Kennett are three stations that offer several walks that take in lovely stretches of Icknield Way country. Each walk is laid out in a tri-fold leaflet available as a downloadable pdf from the MARPA walks website www.marpa.org.uk

Roger's Walk 13 entitled 'Icknield Way—Dullingham to Kennett' is described as follows: *Waymarks along the Icknield Way Path feature a primitive stone axe, a reminder of the great antiquity of this landscape, much of which is now devoted to the horse racing industry. The Path is clearly marked by wooden rails and boundary hedges between the manicured paddocks, many of which are occupied by the aristocrats of the equine world. Less glamorous beasts of another age must have plodded wearily across the famous pack horse bridge at the picturesque village of Moulton. From the wide verges bordering the road from Ashley there is a good view over the valley of the river Kennett towards Dalham Hall and buzzards can sometimes be seen in the skies above.*

Luckily, IWA members will be able to have a taste of some of this on the forth-coming AGM walk—don't miss it!



FANCY A WALK?

Sunday 19 October 10am

Weston-Wallington, N Herts

7.5m circular



Gill & Dave Constantine
07940 515951
North Herts RA

Monday 21 October 10am

Chrishall, NW Essex

6-mile circular



Hilary & John
07875 629713
North Herts RA

Sunday 10 November 10am

Icknield Way Day 3: Hexton-Baldock

15 miles linear. Coach trip from Baldock



Andy
01582 614644
Ivel Valley Ramblers

Friday 29 November 10.30am

King's Forest & River Lark, Suffolk

Leisurely 3-mile circular



Bury St Edmunds RA
01582 614644

VALUING THE HERITAGE OF THE ICKNIELD WAY

For this Autumn edition of the Icknield Way Newsletter, I have revisited a project I began 18 months-2 years ago. Various resources, including of course the Internet, were used to find out where sites of heritage importance are located along the Icknield Way corridor. These include natural heritage (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves etc.), historic heritage (ancient monuments, other historic sites) and special landscapes.

It has been a most interesting exercise which has highlighted the way in which the Icknield Way—including its several strands—provides the thread which holds them all together. Or, perhaps looked at in a different way, to realise how many parts of the way (even if not the entire length) must have been of such importance from very early times that they influenced where people buried their dead. Why else would there be so many burial mounds along its length? Equally, how did so many settlements come into being unless there was a good reason for them to do so? The close proximity of a dependable water supply is an obviously important factor in choosing where to build a permanent settled community but access to trade was another. For access to trade in commodities, there needed to be a route along which the goods could be transported, or livestock brought to market.

As is the case with many of England's old roads, there were periods (sometimes hundreds of years) when the goods that were traded became less important, or modern alternatives were discovered and transported in a different way—and the old ways fell out of use, were lost and forgotten. But others remained important and strategic. Parts of 'our' Icknield Way remain important today, for example as the A505 linking Dunstable with Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock and Royston, and its eastwards extension as the A11 linking Newmarket and Thetford with Norwich.

So the Icknield Way is still very much alive today as a strategic highway into East Anglia (or into the south Midlands, depending on the way you see it!) And it has been there a long time, time enough to 'collect' a whole mass of 'heritage'.

There are just over **100 Scheduled Ancient Monuments** within 5-10 miles of the Icknield Way between Ivinghoe Beacon and Knettishall Heath—and that might be a little conservative. These include barrows and cemeteries, hillforts, moats and fishponds, ditches and dykes, Roman forts and villas, an abbey, a priory, a palace, a temple, deserted Mediaeval villages and several castles.

Turning to the natural heritage along the Icknield Way, there are at least **55 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, many of them also designated Local Nature Reserves** along the Icknield Way, a few of them covering large areas of countryside. Unsurprisingly these reflect regional soil types. At the west end of the Way where it passes through part of Bedfordshire and north Hertfordshire, the underlying chalky soil gives rise to a whole suite of 'downs', hills and quarries, along with a few commons where chalk springs give rise to botanically important damp grasslands. Moving east into Cambridgeshire, not forgetting a small piece of Essex, woodlands located on the boulder clays assume importance, not forgetting a few prominent dykes! Further east still, the Way passes through the very different soils of Suffolk, especially in Breckland where the more acidic wind-blown sands cover the chalk and create many areas of heath.

In addition to individual sites, the Icknield Way passes through parts of the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and through the Breckland and Chiltern Beechwoods Special Areas for Conservation—the latter two of importance in a European context.

So, the Icknield Way Path/Trail may be a less dramatic 'lowland' Long Distance Path, but it can boast a full quota of important heritage along its 110-mile route of which the Icknield Way Association can be proud. *Chris James*



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	carolbondbarton@outlook.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.slade.allard@gmail.com
Maps 16-19	Heydon to Linton	James Quantrill	01279 653899
Maps 20-21	Linton to Willingham Green	VACANT—PLEASE CAN YOU HELP?	
Maps 22-27	Willingham Green to Icklingham	Phil Prigg	phil@prigg.co.uk
Maps 28-29	Icklingham to D-house	VACANT—PLEASE CAN YOU HELP?	
Maps 30-32	D-house to Knettishall Heath	Edward Wortley	ewortley@tiscali.co.uk
Maps 33-34	Toddington alternative	Tom Chevalier	tom@chevalier.me.uk
Maps 35-36	Thetford Link	VACANT - PLEASE CAN YOU HELP?	

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PLEASE CAN YOU HELP US? If you have a couple of hours each month and a good head for figures, please contact Tom.

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TELEGRAPH HILL RESTORATION

Earlier this year, we heard that the Pegsdon Hills Volunteers from Bedfordshire had gained permission from the landowner to undertake some desperately needed scrub clearance on the parallel banks on Telegraph Hill, near Lilley. This was a very timely intervention—the banks had become almost totally lost under bushes, apart from a very small patch that still supported its important assembly of chalk plants.



Photos: right (above) - Telegraph Hill banks disappearing under bushes in 2016 and (below) - after the Pegsdon Hills volunteers had been at work removing them in March 2019. Well done!