



NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2016

ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

AGM 2016

Saturday 1st October
SUNDON VILLAGE
HALL
2PM

With morning walk starting
 from the hall at 10.30am

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter!
 It will soon be time to shrug off a winter layer and explore somewhere new—perhaps a section of the Way that you don't yet know? To help you, we have started to load some circular walks on our website. Or why not try out part of the Garden City Greenway to discover the undulating farmland and extensive views of north Hertfordshire? There is our regular 'Fancy a Walk' spot and a special report on the Great Stones Way.

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2015 AGM IN ESSEX

It is truly amazing that the weather always seems to be superb for our annual meetings and Saturday 3rd October was no exception. The only disappointment was that relatively few members turned up to enjoy the traditional morning walk (where were you all?).

Local IW warden, James Quantrill, led us on a delightful circular route from our starting point north of the centre of Chrishall in a south-easterly direction towards the parish church and then along the southern boundary of Park Wood. From here there were wonderful views across the rich farmland of this high part of Essex.



Looking south-west on a beautiful misty autumnal morning over the gently rolling landscape of Icknield Way country in north-west Essex

With brief halts to admire a restored water pump and to stamp our identity on a way-mark post, we followed the boundaries of the large woodland northwards until we arrived at an intersection with Parkhouse Lane. This un-metalled track is considered locally to be the Icknield Way but we continued on along Dark Lane before turning westwards again, following the walkers' route back into Chrishall.

Lunch at a pub is another worthy tradition of our AGMs and, thankfully, the pub at Chrishall is still thriving, welcomes walkers and sells good food and ales. And it was here that members met a couple who were enjoying this stretch of our path, so it was an excellent opportunity to obtain feedback from them—and it was all good!

Read on for more details of the AGM.



Parkhouse Lane, Chrishall

THE AGM IN 2015 AT CHRISHALL, ESSEX



(Left): IWA members gather near Chrishall Village Hall at the start of the traditional morning walk, led in 2015 by James Quantrill (far right), our voluntary warden for the Heydon to Linton section.

(Right): Chairman Tom Chevalier (standing centre) and Roy & Sue Wheeler listen as Phil Prigg explains the workings of this beautifully restored water pump



(Left): Holy Trinity Church at Chrishall where, during 1803, the church wardens took turns on the roof on watch in case of invasion by Napoleon.



(Above): A well-earned lunch at the Red Cow PH in Chrishall where the AGM group met a couple coincidentally walking the Icknield Way path on the same day.

(Left) "Everybody else has their logo on this post—why shouldn't we? Good job I have one in my rucksack!" Tom had the hammer and nails, too.

MORE ON THE AGM

During his chairman's report, Tom Chevalier reported back on his meeting with the new Ridgeway Officer, Sarah Wright. They had met for a walk around Ivinghoe Beacon and Tom was pleased to say that she was very supportive of the Association's efforts to gain National Trail status for the Icknield Way. She urged Tom to keep up the momentum of promoting the IW to all the Local Access Forums along the route and offered to advise us on the appropriate Natural England contacts for National Trails.

The Association's finances are in a very healthy position, largely because it has continued to receive a steady income from subscriptions and book sales during the last couple of years without spending a lot of money! The operating surplus for 2014/15 was £664.06 and the balance in the account at the end of the financial year was almost £7,000.00. The chairman pointed out that one of the challenges with planning and implementing spending on projects is the committee's shortage of members to spread the workload. The Icknield Way needs much more promotion, publicity, information boards but all these need people to make it happen.

On this note, it is good to report that Issa Cochran, the Association's new route warden for Linton to Willingham Green, was elected as a new committee member. The current committee list with contact details is given on the back page of the newsletter. **Sadly, no-one has yet come forward to offer themselves as a Treasurer.**

In common with many organisations, the trend in membership numbers is downward. Sue Prigg told the meeting that, currently, the IWA has 74 paying members at 67 separate addresses. What seems to happen is that someone walks the Icknield Way, supports the Association with a subscription for a year or two, then 'drops off' the list. Sue suggested that the Association needed to broaden its membership base to include people other than walkers: local historians, archaeologists, parish councils, local pubs, schools and community groups might all be encouraged to take an interest and give support to the concept of the Icknield Way.

Tom Chevalier asked everyone to go away and think about how the organisation might grow itself and to come up with names of people or groups that could be approached. He thanked all the committee for their continued hard work, especially Lesley, Sue and Chris for their 'front-line' work for the Association.

CIRCULAR WALKS

In the last newsletter, we mentioned that some circular walks were in the pipeline. Happily, we can confirm that four walks have now been loaded on a new page on the website, each including a stretch of the Icknield Way Path. Each walk has a link to a route description and a second link to a map. Three of the walks describe circulars in the hilly country at the Chilterns end of the Icknield Way: Sharpenhoe Clappers—Sundon Hills; Sundon Hills—Toddington and the Dunstable Downs. A fourth describes a route taking in a high point in Cambridgeshire—the 360' Rivey Hill north of Linton!

Two more walks are in preparation. We really would appreciate some more, particularly from the centre and east end of the Way. So, if you live and walk in these areas, please send an outline of your suggestion with the basic route information and we will turn this into a route description and sort out a map.

<http://www.icknieldwaypath.co.uk/walks.html>

CAN YOU HELP?

The Icknield Way Association needs a Treasurer.

The accounts are in excellent order.

The Association is not handling huge amounts of money.

The annual transactions are not complicated.

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

GUIDEBOOKS

Our Walker's Guidebook is still selling very well. Sue Prigg, who handles the sales, reports that 105 copies have been sold since the Annual General Meeting. This is absolutely marvellous! So good, in fact, she has ordered another print run of 100 copies.

So when you are out and about this summer, please remember to help us promote the book by mentioning it to friends, or people you meet out walking. Tell them about this beautiful, peaceful walk across lowland England taking in the unsung charms of East Anglia and our excellent guide for walkers.

WE NEED AN ICKNIELD WAY PATH CHAMPION!

Can you help find us a regional 'personality' to help us celebrate and champion the Icknield Way Path, not just a figurehead but someone who can help us seek support for our aim of a joined-up 'Great Chalk Way' ?

WALKING THE GREAT STONES WAY - words & photos by Sue Prigg

We had wanted to walk the Great Stones Way (GSW) since we first heard that the Friends of the Ridgeway proposed to create this new route. We bought the Guide by Steve Davidson as soon as it was published in 2014. Our normal way of walking long distance paths is to use companies that book suitable accommodation and transport our main baggage along the route, so that we arrive at each night's destination to be greeted by our bags in our room. Very civilised!

This year we were delighted to find that 'Lets Go Walking' had added the GSW to their wide selection of paths. The information they supply is excellent: guide book, laminated maps with route clearly marked and a laminated booklet with directions to each night's accommodation, which was the best we've had on our many adventures.

The GSW officially starts at Barbury Castle but the first stage in the guidebook starts from Coate Water Country Park, near Swindon, which is well connected to public transport. We drove to the Sun Inn at Coate where we were able to leave our car for the week. In the morning we walked through the car park and straight onto the start of the GSW. We followed the edge of the lake out of Coate Park, went over the M4 then took the cycle path through Chisledon until we turned south along the old railway line, now also a cycle path. From the A346 we headed up and along Burderop Down, with far -reaching views to our right, until we arrived at Barbury Castle Country Park.



Barbury Castle is an Iron Age hill fort and the earthworks are massive. The route passes through the earthworks and merges with the Ridgeway for the next few miles. We found the first (and just about the only) GSW waymark here. As we made our way over Hackpen Hill we were very grateful that it was dry as a bone as the track is so deeply rutted the whole way.

Near Overton Down we turned off on the Herepath or Wessex Ridgeway to Avebury to find our B&B, Dorwyn Manor. Panic set in as we neared the pub in the centre of the stone circle. It was covered in scaffolding and this was where we would have our evening meal! Much to our relief, food was still being served. Walking to and from our B&B through the stones in the evening light was magical.



Next morning, back through the circle, then on past Silbury Hill gleaming in the sun, and up the track to West Kennett Long Barrow. From here there were marvellous views back to Silbury Hill.



Returning to the main path we passed the Sanctuary nearby then through East Kennett and up onto Lurkeley Hill, crossing the Wansdyke.

Eventually we climbed up Walkers Hill to Adams Grave, a Neolithic long barrow with views in all directions then, as we descended towards Alton Barnes, the 19th century White Horse came into view. Our bed for the night was in Honey Street so we walked on to the Kennet and Avon Canal where we checked out the Barge Inn where we would later have dinner. This had been a much shorter walk which gave us plenty of time to explore. Our B&B at Well Cottage was superb.

We returned to the Canal next morning in brilliant sunshine and passed through Woodborough with its rebuilt 13th century church then Bottlesford with its Quiet Lane. Here we decided to take the Marden Henge loop – the GSW goes right through the middle of the remains of the henge – finding it impossible to pass the Millstream PH (lunch). Taking the Marden Henge loop was probably not the best idea in retrospect – the guide book said 'follow the track, dog-leg up the hill and reach the track along the edge of Salisbury Plain training area'. The track actually ended in an old quarry and the path wasn't marked so we clambered up and up (with a lot of bad language from one of us) and finally got to where we should be. We were rewarded for our efforts with fantastic views.

Then a long yomp alongside the track with plenty of military activity along it. We had been hearing massive crumping bangs all the way from the start of the week. Now, as we got towards Casterley Camp, there was a large convoy speeding along the road in cloud of dust, and as we turned away from the track to walk down into Upavon, the bangs erupted in earnest, filling the sky with great black plumes of smoke. Quite a sight!

THE GREAT STONES WAY—continued

At Upavon we stayed at the Antelope Inn. We had been upgraded to a newly renovated room, actually more of a suite, with the most beautiful bathroom with a gigantic square bath – the landlady thought we would appreciate it. We did!

The following day we should have returned to Casterley Camp to continue along the GSW but we are not very good at retracing our steps so caught the X5 bus 5 minutes down the road to rejoin the route at Enford. We were now walking along the Avon Valley and were amazed at the number of beautiful Norman churches on our route, most of them sadly with no information about the buildings. On arriving at Netheravon we struck out on the Stonehenge Loop towards Durrington where we were staying in the Stonehenge Inn – excellent food, interesting plumbing!

The next day we had booked a timed slot at Stonehenge, so we walked across the landscape towards the Stones, passing through Durrington Walls and Woodhenge then turning down by the Cursus and Old King Barrows.



Now that the old road has vanished and the Visitor Centre is over the hill and out of sight, this is the most wonderful way to come upon Stonehenge, looming above you. We were very impressed by the management of so many people that allowed you to feel you had all the time in the world and were not

crowded out. We hadn't been to Stonehenge for many years and utterly enjoyed our visit – we just have to go back to see everything at the Visitor Centre as we did not return but walked away, over the A303 (easy!) and over Normanton Down with its many barrows back down into the Avon Valley and eventually Upper Woodford.

Our bed for the night was off route – the Stones Hotel at High Post – but well worth the extra distance. Again, averse to retracing our steps we found an excellent path to rejoin the GSW at Salterton where it was a short walk towards Old Sarum, an enormous mound in the distance.



We had plenty of time to explore the castle and enjoy the views before eating our lunch sitting on the high earth ramparts. The final stretch of 2 miles took us into the centre of Salisbury, one of our favourite places.

After six days walking with not a drop of rain and plenty of sunshine, things had to change and that night the heavens opened! The downpour stopped long enough for us to get to the bus stop and pick up the X5 bus all the way back to Coate Water – 2 hours free travel (thank you, bus passes) through many of the places we had walked through earlier in the week and others, like Marlborough, that we could have, if we had chosen different Loops.

The GSW may not be the longest path but it is certainly the most interesting, especially with all the possible loops and highly recommended.

FANCY A WALK?

Sunday 8 May Balsham, Cambridgeshire

12.5 mile circular to Burrough Green
Start 10am at church/playing field CP
TL587508



01440 710919
Newmarket Ramblers

Sunday 15 May Tuddenham, Suffolk

13-mile circular via West Stow to Icklingham
Start 10am at playing field CP off the Green TL738715



01440 710919
Newmarket Ramblers

Sunday 19 June Sharpenhoe, Bedfordshire

An all-day 10-mile circular
Meet initially 9.30am Woodside CP
Hitchin TL 188293



David & Margaret Stock
01438 894595
North Herts Ramblers

Thursday 4 August Great Chishill, Cambridgeshire

A 6-mile circular
Start 10am at Chishill village hall CP
TL 427386



Jenny Gilson
01763 245969
Royston Ramblers

Sunday 11 September Mildenhall, Breckland, Suffolk

An 8-mile circumnavigation!
Meet 10am in lower CP behind Sainsbury in Mildenhall TL 713745



01440 710919
Newmarket Ramblers

Thursday 6 October Wallington, Hertfordshire

5 mile circular
Start 10am opposite village hall
TL293336



Sandy Earls
01763 243003
Royston Ramblers

HANDS-FREE WALKING?

John Boardman encourages some thinking outside the box—or the guidebook in this case!

Our over 60s walking group had reached the summit plateau of Ingleborough. We had been going in and out of cloud throughout the last stages of the final climb from Clapham. As we finished the sandwiches, visibility had dropped to about ten yards. A compass bearing would take us from the trig point to the start of the Horton path, but there was an easier way. The two seventy year olds consulted their Garmin Navigators and took us to the descent point, then through the critical turning point a little further down the jumble of paths leaving the plateau. The little screens provided a definitive answer to the key question on any journey – “Are we there yet?” – and we came out of the mist right on the right track.

At home, we lead a couple of walks a month and we use the digital OS Maps facility to plan them, print them, download them to a “navigator” and share them across the electronic media. We do the same with our long distance walks – Weavers and Angles Ways last year, the last half of the Viking Way this year. We haven’t got guidebooks for any of those walks – we just downloaded from the internet. Over the last four years we have walked over 500 miles of “trails” without a physical guidebook.

Do these new ways of providing mapping and navigating mean we should think about how we support IW walkers (and wardens) and are there new opportunities we should explore?

IWA has a truly excellent guidebook and well maintained way-marks across the whole route. The guidebook promotes the route and generates a small surplus income from each copy sold to fund the continuing work of maintaining and promoting the “Way”. There is also an excellent website that stands alone in providing information on the Way including any up to date route issues, and also feeds back to promoting the Guide. What extra benefit could we deliver, or receive from providing further digital options? What might we do?

Some of the options are:

- Put the whole of the Guide on to the website in sections that can be downloaded or printed. This would increase accessibility, but probably reduce Guide sales and hence income.
- Put a GPX version of the route on the website that is downloadable on to “navigator” type systems. This could be paid for, or perhaps provided free if a paper guide is bought.
- With these on our website, a series of small posts could be erected along the route displaying QR codes that would enable smartphone users to access directly either the route page or the relevant GPX section. These could also be used to link to “information board” pages at much lower cost than physical signage.
- Wardens and trail users could take advantage of digital mapping to enable precise reporting of locations where there is an issue e.g. of maintenance, signage, or access. (OS Maps provide ten figure grid references, for instance).

No doubt users of digital mapping and smart-phone style technology will have other ideas. It would be helpful to have your views and ideas so that these can be collated and perhaps discussed at our next AGM in the Autumn.

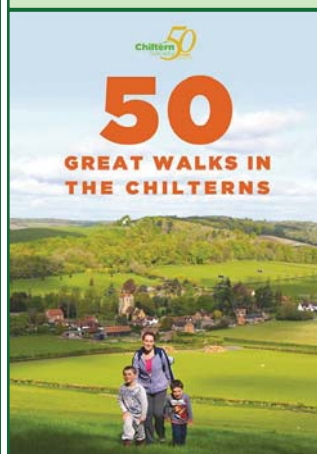
Well, what do you think? Is this the way forward along the Icknield Way? Do, please let us know.

THE ICKNIELD WAY VILLAGES

Whilst we were enjoying our AGM morning walk, another organisation was also walking along the Way that day (although they had set off much earlier than we did!). The Parish of the Icknield Way Villages is a rural community of seven village churches in the very north-west corner of the Chelmsford Diocese in the deanery of Saffron Walden. The parish sits between the medieval market towns of Saffron Walden and Royston, with villages in both Essex and Cambridgeshire. The Rural Dean was leading an all-day walk stopping at each of the seven church for prayers and music.

We were delighted to discover that this rural community group considered itself to be so connected to ‘our’ historic track-way.

CHILTERN WALKS



A book published in 2015 by the Chiltern Society to celebrate their 50th Anniversary—the title speaks for itself! Spiral-bound 212 pages.

Available for £14.95 via the Chiltern Society website

A GARDEN CITY GREENWAY

For lovers of peace, stillness and solitude, the stretch of the Icknield Way through a town such as Letchworth might be considered pretty purgatorial. Even our guide book suggests that road walking can be avoided by catching the train or bus through to Baldock!

However, Letchworth has a fine example of a circular walk which has been improved year-on-year since its creation by the Heritage Foundation as a permanent commemoration of the centenary in 2003 of the founding of the Garden City.

With a total length of 13.6 miles (21.8Km), the **Letchworth Greenway** provides its residents as well as visitors with an attractive, all-weather route around the Garden City through farmland and woodland. Each of Letchworth's special outdoor attractions are connected to the Greenway and, of course, the Icknield Way Path is linked to it at Wilbury Hill on the west side of the town and Blackhorse Road on the east. Anyone wishing to completely avoid the urban character of the town could therefore use the Greenway as 'loops' off the Icknield Way but this would be a shame because Letchworth has its own special history as the world's first garden city.

<http://www.greenway.org.uk/downloads/greenway-map-guide>



SPECIAL PLANTS ALONG THE ICKNIELD WAY

At the moment, the weather is entirely normal — thundery showers, cold snaps and a few blissfully warm sunny days — typical and unreliable April!

However, better weather will soon be here so it is time to start looking down at your feet, not for mud and trip hazards, but for the characteristic wild flowers of the chalk and chalk heath along the Icknield Way (IW).

region, occurring in short chalky turf at Therfield Heath, west of Royston. It is well worth making a detour from the IW along the Heath to find this beautiful member of the Anemone family, flowering in April.



In May/June, Common Milkwort can be found sprinkled in good quality chalk grassland along with Common Rockrose.



Pasque Flower is one of the rarest flowers in our

Later in the year but still on the chalk, look out for the tall purple spires of Clustered Bellflower and



the unusual straw-coloured Carline Thistle.



On the more sandy soils of Breckland are more

specialities including the very prickly Viper's Bugloss, beloved of bees and butterflies,



the spectacular drifts of Maiden Pink near Icklingham



and not forgetting the sweeps of Heather at Cavenham Heath. So why not find room for a small flower ID book in your pack?

All photos: Chris & Trevor James