

# NEWSLETTER

## SPRING 2018

### ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

## AGM 2018

**Saturday 13th October**

**Lilley Village Hall**

**near Hitchin at 2pm.**

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

Spring seems to have finally arrived—with a blast of Mediterranean sunshine which is more than welcome after the freezing conditions brought to us only a few days previously. Such is our fascinating and capricious British weather!

I am delighted to bring you the Spring edition of our newsletter. In this edition we have a write-up of our AGM followed by a delightful article about wildflowers of the chalk. There is a larger selection of walks than usual because there were so many to choose from! Hopefully they will inspire readers to go out and explore unfamiliar stretches of the Icknield Way. Our trail extends across a widely diverse and fascinating landscape where communities along the route

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

AGM 2017 at Ashley	2
Some Wildflowers of the Chalk	3
A Great Chalk Way	4
Fancy a Walk	4
Things to do and Places to go along the Trail	5
Royston Board Makeover	5
The Linton Kitchen	5
Route Wardens	6
Committee Contacts	6
More Walks	6



The wonderful view from Deacon Hill—not far from Lilley

have so much going on that I have selected a few activities and ideas to demonstrate what our trail has to offer visitors and locals alike, including an art installation inspired by the Icknield Way at the very far extremity of our Great Chalk Way (more about this on page 4) - if you include the Norfolk coast.

Those familiar with the 6th Edition of our Walkers Guide (which has now sold 1,377 copies) will recognise the stunning image—left. An English Heritage 'Blue Plaque' has recently been erected at 31 Mornington Crescent, London, the home of Spencer Frederik Gore, the painter.

Finally, we welcome new members who have joined us recently: Charles Jenkins (Devizes, Wiltshire), Julia Newton (Barnard Castle, Co. Durham) and Paul & Rosalind Gray (Hildersham, Cambridgeshire).

*Chris James*

# AGM 2017 AT ASHLEY

## *Phil Prigg writes:*

Ashley is quite a small village, only a couple of miles from the centre of Newmarket. Like other communities in the area, it is no longer surrounded by arable fields. The landscape has been transformed by the creation of studs for the breeding of racehorses in recent years. This was soon apparent as we set off on our walk from the village playing-field, initially on a path parallel to the B class road out of the village, but soon turning right onto a wide grassed strip, with tall hedges on either side. This is part of a diversion of the original route of the foot-path, which used to run diagonally across a huge arable field. The current route was devised so as to suit the paddock layout but whilst this provides very pleasant sheltered walking, views are extremely limited. Reaching a tree belt, we turned left alongside it, crossing a stud road from which it was possible to spot what is left of the tower of the ruined All Saints' Church at Silverley, once with a community larger than Ashley for company, but now reduced to a farm-house and a handful of cottages.

Continuing, beyond the stud road, as before, we arrived at a minor road, and turned right towards Cheveley, following a manicured verge, typical of the 'stud belt', to reach Broad Green, (and it is just that). To the left is Banstead Manor Stud, now the home of the champion racehorse, Frankel, but no time to pay him a visit. Instead we left the Green at its far end, picking up a sunken footpath to the right, running between hedges, and exiting, via the gates of Brook Stud, at Pump Green, where we joined the Icknield Way Path, heading north along Cheveley High Street. Very soon, the impressive cruciform St Mary's Church, thought to date from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, was reached and, finding it to be open in readiness for a wedding, a quick visit was made.



IWA members in the tidy stud farm landscape near Ashley



St Mary's Parish Church at Cheveley

Resuming, we continued down the High Street to a fingerpost, where we turned right, with the IWP, to return to Ashley, via yet another hedged footpath, this one featuring a shallow valley. Arriving in the village we had a quick look round its core, including the large duck-pond, before returning to the playing field.

## *Chris James continues:*

Sadly, the pub at Ashley could not serve us any food, but the village shop could and we ate it convivially around a table in the village hall where, in a short while we continued with our meeting. We were an extra small group without a Chairman to keep us in order, Tom Chevalier being on temporary 'sick' leave following minor surgery. Our formal business was soon concluded! Tom Chevalier's report was read out by Chris, as was a report from Clive Beckett. Tom and Clive had attended a meeting with Friends of the Ridgeway to discuss long-term aspirations for a 'Great Chalk Way'. All were agreed that this would be an excellent name for a coast-to-coast trail across southern England but that, realistically, unless there was full government support for it (which was unlikely at the present time), it could not be formally promoted and 'serviced'.

The meeting also agreed some minor amendments to the IWA's constitution: that the Way would be promoted and publicised as a route for all users as appropriate (not just walkers) and that our officers would include a Web Officer and Development Officer. The Association's finances continue to be in a healthy position. Suggestions for expenditure included the funding of seats in suitable locations. The Committee remains unchanged but with the addition of Clive Beckett as our Development Officer. The meeting was followed by tea and then we all went home.

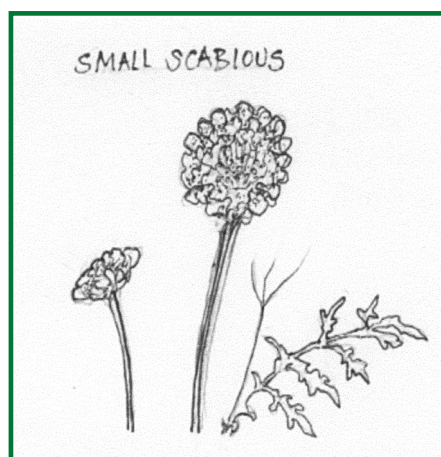
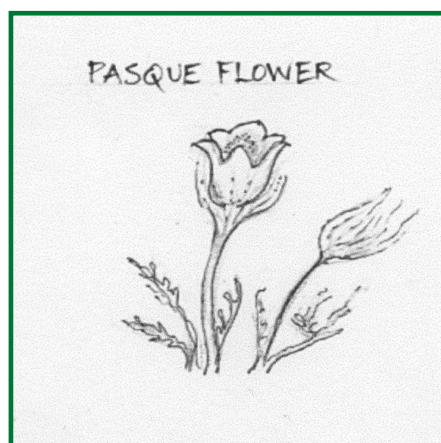


# SOME WILDFLOWERS OF THE CHALK

## *A Botanical Note from Issa Cochran*

The Icknield Way, running along the “chalk spine of England” from Knettishall Heath in Suffolk to Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire, is host to a number of calcareous plants. The underlying rock is almost entirely chalk, but often masked by overlying glacial deposits which vary from heavy boulder clay in parts of Essex and South Cambridgeshire to the poor and sandy Breckland soils of the Suffolk/ Norfolk borders. During the Upper Cretaceous era 60-70 million years ago, the sea covered these southern areas. Countless remains of microscopic animals, made from calcium carbonate, became compressed into soft porous rock which eroded to form shallow quick-drying soils which were strongly alkaline.

Chalk grassland is particularly rich in colourful flowers. In early spring we have hairy violets and cowslips, then in May the pale yellow Rock Rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, the delicate horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa* and the wiry blue (and sometimes pink) milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*. Later in the summer, the yellow-flowered composites (daisies) such as the hawkbits, hawkweeds and hawkbeards proliferate, for example the rough hawkbit *Leontodon hispidum* which is a strong yellow, and the mouse-ear hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella*, with paler lemon-yellow flowers.

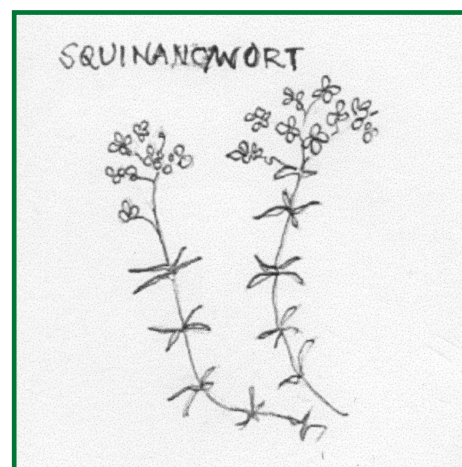
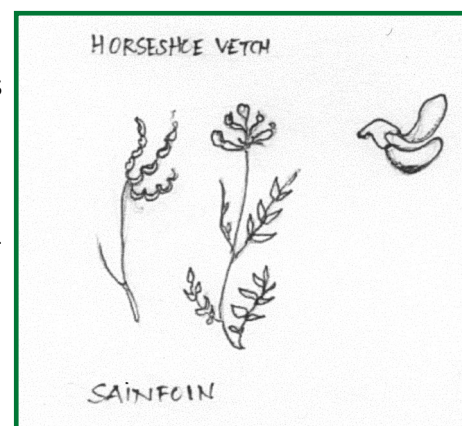
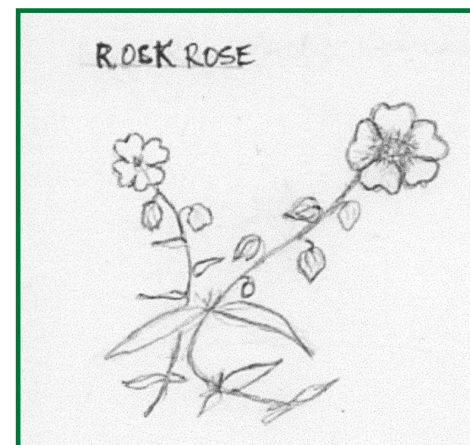
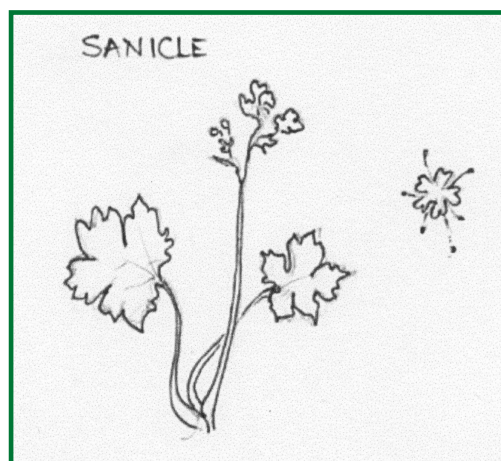


*Thanks to Issa for sending not only the words but also the pen sketches.*

*Issa warden's the Icknield Way Path between Linton and Willingham Green.*

Some plants such as Large Thyme *Thymus pulegioides* and Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor* which can tolerate dry conditions can be found in many places where chalk is close to the surface on the path. Others species are more rare in their distribution. The Pasque Flower *Pulsatilla vulgaris* is found only on Royston Heath, and the Chilterns chalk favours the Chiltern Gentian *Gentianella germanica*. Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* follows the chalk quite precisely along the Icknield Way as does the tiny Squinancywort *Asperula cynanchica*.

In the woodlands ,too, it is possible to find chalk-loving plants. Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, with its small umbels of greenish-white flowers can be easily overlooked but search for it under the shade of beech trees and you will often find it. The Hairy Violet *Viola hirta* is a chalk specialist found on the scrubby edges of woods and grassy places.



# A GREAT CHALK WAY

## *Clive Beckett writes:*

Since the last AGM, Tom Chevalier and I have met with the Friends of the Ridgeway Long Distance Path and Tim Lewis (Wiltshire Ramblers) regarding taking forward the idea of developing a Greater National Trail following existing National Trails and Regional Trails from Dorset to Norfolk. We have also corresponded with Andy Hutcheson of the Peddars Way. Unfortunately, because Natural England is currently developing the Coast to Coast National Path and has limited funding available for other initiatives, the chances of Natural England backing the development of a new National Trail is very remote. In fact, budget pressures are so severe that there is on-going concern about Natural England's funding for existing trails.

However, there is strong support for the idea of a coast-to-coast recreational trail across England from Dorset to Norfolk following the line of the chalk ridges. We have agreed that the idea should be explored further and that we would call the trail the 'Great Chalk Way', unless someone came up with a better suggestion. The route is mostly present on the ground throughout its length, although the Wessex Ridgeway requires further work as the route could follow several courses (as does the Icknield Way Trail).

Initially each separate national/regional trail would continue to manage its own section but once the Wessex section is resolved we will look at some joint promotion of the route throughout its length. We have not ruled out a bid for Lottery funding at some time in the future and we continue to hope that Natural England will eventually accept the Great Chalk Way as a National Trail.



The coast-to-coast route of the combined trails constituting a Great Chalk Way, as conceived and drawn by the Friends of the Ridgeway.

What a great pity that what seems such an obvious and exciting concept to all of us who believe in it should still be as far from being achieved as it was a couple of decades ago! (Ed.)

# FANCY A WALK?

**Saturday 28 April**

**Great Chesterford, Essex**

Circular 11.5 miles. Meet 10am at phone box in village centre CB10 1NP. TL506427



Chris H

01223 690557

Cambridge Rambling Club

**Saturday 12 May**

**Barton Hills, Bedfordshire**

Afternoon Walk 6.5 miles. Meet 1.30pm at Recreation Ground, Old Road, Barton MK45 4LB. TL 082303.



Chris

07538 826564

Bedfordshire Ramblers

**Sunday 27 May**

**Knettishall Heath, Suffolk**

John Morris Walk—long (10 miles) & short options (5 miles). Meet 10am pay & display CP (£1) at E end of nature reserve.



Phil & Sue

01638 751289

Newmarket Ramblers

**Wednesday 6 June**

**Stetchworth & Dullingham Ley, Cambs**

Morning Walk 6.5 miles. Meet 10am



Ian & Helen

01223 812573

Cambridge Rambling Club

**Sunday 17 June**

**Sharpenhoe, Bedfordshire**

A Chilterns 15-miler.



Patrick

01223 527634

Cambridge Rambling Club

**Wednesday 20 June**

**Lilley, Hertfordshire**

An all-day walk 12 miles



Anne or Miranda

01954 260276

Cambridge Rambling Club



# THINGS TO DO AND PLACES TO GO ALONG THE TRAIL

For those who want to explore Icknield Way country but who may not wish (or be able) to walk all day long—or who have to leave reluctant walkers behind!

## WAYFARING

### WELLS BEACH, NORFOLK 21ST -27TH MAY

A journey of exploration, inspired by the present landscape and ancient routes of the Icknield Way. Artists 'And Now' will create a series of artworks inviting audiences to think about movement and migration; how we arrive at, understand, inhabit, protect and leave a space.

<https://nnfestival.org.uk/whats-on/wayfaring/>

## CHILFORD HALL VINEYARD

### TASTINGS AND TOURS ALL YEAR ROUND

Close to Linton amidst tranquil, rolling countryside Chilford Hall is one of England's oldest established vineyards and one of the largest in East Anglia.

[www.chilfordhall.co.uk/vineyard](http://www.chilfordhall.co.uk/vineyard)

## BRITISH SCHOOLS MUSEUM, HITCHIN

### OPEN ON FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS

A full year-long exhibition about Hertfordshire and WW1. On the first Sunday of each month you can enjoy a Victorian lesson. Lessons start at 2:30 & 3:30pm – don't be late!

[www.britishschoolsmuseum.org.uk/visit/](http://www.britishschoolsmuseum.org.uk/visit/)

## DUNSTABLE DOWNS - 50 THINGS CLUB CHILTERN GATEWAY CENTRE

### First Sunday of every month 2pm—4pm

A '50 Things to do before you are 11' event for children — a variety of activities from the '50 Things' handbook, depending on the weather.

[www.wherecanwego.com/item/e1214374/dunstable-](http://www.wherecanwego.com/item/e1214374/dunstable-)

## THE LINTON KITCHEN

Further thanks are due to the steady contribution to guide book sales being made by Gemma and her girls at this excellent community café and shop at Linton. Our books are going off the shelf like hot cakes—along with delicious lunches and teas. Perfect for hungry walkers along the Icknield Way! [www.lintonkitchen.co.uk/about/](http://www.lintonkitchen.co.uk/about/)

## SUMMER LIGHT GLASS-MAKING WORKSHOP

### PALACE HOUSE, NEWMARKET

### SATURDAY 2ND JUNE 11am—4pm

Create individual pieces with glass slides inspired by "Summer Light". This drop-in workshop is aimed to give all ages the opportunity to work with glass.

[www.palacehousenewmarket.co.uk/visiting/whats-on](http://www.palacehousenewmarket.co.uk/visiting/whats-on)

## LINTON ZOO CONSERVATION CENTRE

### OPEN DAILY

A specialist breeding centre for the world's rarest species. Educational activities for children.

[www.lintonzoo.com](http://www.lintonzoo.com)

## ANNUAL KITE FESTIVAL

### THERFIELD HEATH, ROYSTON

### SUNDAY 5TH AUGUST 10.30AM -4.30PM

A true family day out with spectacular professional kite flying displays, children's workshops and more kites than you've ever seen before!

[www.roystonkitefestival.com/](http://www.roystonkitefestival.com/)

## INFORMATION BOARD 'MAKEOVER' AT ROYSTON

We are delighted to report that the Icknield Way information board on the wall at Royston Sports Club has been re-furbished and is now doing its duty once again. This is entirely due to the persistent effort of David Allard, our route warden for this section of the Way. So, thank you David for your help with this project.

