



# ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2022

### AGM 2022

**MONDAY 17TH OCTOBER  
7.30PM**

**To be held via Teams.**

**Please email Lesley Blundell to  
confirm attendance and request  
a link to the meeting.**

*Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter!*

I am sure that we are all relieved that as far as the nation's health is concerned (even if not the national economy!) we are almost back to normal. Many of us will have had Covid, including me just recently, and some of us might have had it without knowing it.

Your committee is also very relieved that Tom, our Chairman, is back home again following a very sudden and frightening medical 'episode' and prolonged stay in hospital earlier this summer. He is still being kept an eye on—quite right too—and his mobility is improving. Welcome back, Tom! And thank you for all you are doing to catch up, including giving some colour to our hand-axe logo (see left, above). Special thanks to Bridget, Tom's wife, for running the guide-book mailing service in the meantime.

And there is more good news. Through the good efforts of Doug Landsman (see page 4), we have found not only a new Treasurer but also new wardens for three sections of the Icknield Way Trail. Their names and contact details are on the back page and, already, Andy Mountain has found some issues on his section that need addressing by Essex County Council.

A warm welcome to Tim Johnson who will be officially elected Treasurer at the forthcoming AGM.

And on that subject, ***please do get in touch with Lesley to obtain the link for the meeting. It would be so good to see you this year. Even if not 'in the flesh', a face would be great!*** We would welcome discussion on our activities and the assurance that you still want us to be here, campaigning for the long-term protection and recognition of the Icknield Way.

*Chris James*



The Icknield Way west of Telegraph Hill, Hertfordshire

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The Icknield Way west of Peddars Way?	2
What is LiDAR?	3
Thurstan Shaw—a Poem	4
IWA links up with CVS	4
Brecks Link	4
Voluntary Route Wardens—contacts	5
Committee—contacts	5
Welcome to new wardens	5

# THE ICKNIELD WAY WEST OF PEDDAR'S WAY?

- some research by Doug Landman

There seem to be references to the Icknield Way from 903 AD onwards in various charters. Apparently, two of the references to the Icknield Way are by Henry of Huntingdon in the 1120s and in a charter from 1185 referencing the Ikenhildstrate known by the Romans. The Way is also mentioned in charters of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, describing a track of that name running from east to west – in particular a 40-mile stretch from Buckinghamshire to Wiltshire.

Interestingly, the Icknield Way is still present as a main road name: from Dunstable in Bedfordshire to Tring in Hertfordshire (the current B489): from Tring to Little Kimble in Buckinghamshire (known as the Upper Icknield Way (the current B4009): and from Little Kimble to Chinnor in Oxfordshire (again, the current B4009). Ickford in Buckinghamshire is very close to the Oxfordshire border and is less than 10 miles north-west of the currently named Ridgeway path and the Lower Icknield Way (the current B4009) that passes less than a mile north-west of the Ridgeway at Chinnor. In addition, the Icknield Way Path is shown on the OS Map Sheet 165 (Aylesbury and Leighton Buzzard) as running with, criss-crossing and re-joining the current Ridgeway path from Ivinghoe Beacon south-west all the way to Bledlow Cross, on the northern edge of Bledlow Great Wood, just south east of Chinnor.

Perhaps the entire coast to coast route was, at some points in our history, referred to as the Icknield Way? Indeed, to the Friesian and Germanic people that came to England after the Romans had left, the Icenii would have been known as an ancient people, their villages known by their name, and their routes and boundaries also known by their name. 'Eld' in Old English means a journey, an act of going, and departure; 'Eald' means old, ancient, and from ancient times; 'Weg' means way. It is easy to understand, therefore, what 'Icenii Eld' or 'Eald' would have meant – and still means. The 'Icenii-eld' or 'Icenii-eald weg' (all pronounced similarly to modern English) is still recognisable.

There is also the possibility that the main route of the Icknield Way in Norfolk was actually several miles to the west of the current route of the Peddars Way, passing through Ickburgh near Grimes Graves, then Icklingham near the West Stow Anglo-Saxon village in present-day Suffolk. Icklingham lies on the River Lark which would have been navigable when this part of East Anglia was a more watery place.

The place names surely indicate the ancient route: Grime's Graves was the most important flint mine anywhere in Britain (and possibly Europe) and flints were traded extensively, making this more westerly route more likely in practice. Also, the Peddars Way is widely acknowledged to be a largely straight route made by the Romans to guard against incursions by the Icenii people.

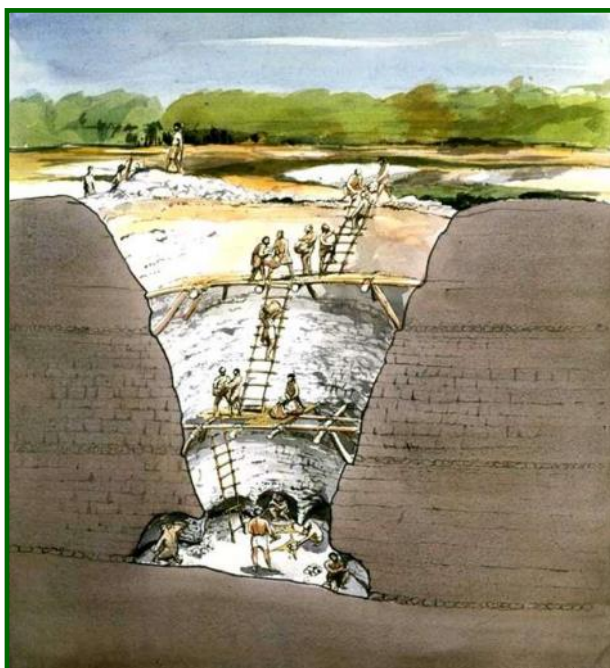
In more modern times, the historic route has been obscured by the planting by the Forestry Commission of the commercial conifer plantations of Thetford Forest and by the MOD appropriating training areas at Thetford and Stanford, as they have done on Salisbury Plain and other parts of Britain.

Even more recently, a LiDAR report by David Ratledge in 2020 indicates that the Icknield Way ran very close to Grime's Graves and ended near Ickburgh. When East Anglia was largely a fen and water world, Ickburgh connected to the ancient Fen Causeway via the River Wissey which flowed into the Wash at Denver. The ease by which prime flint from Grime's Graves could be excavated, transported to various places over land along the Icknield Way, and by boat via the Fen Causeway across the Wash to Lincolnshire and in to the North Sea and beyond is obvious. Add to this the evidence of stone age burial chambers, stone circles (some of them now turned into churches), monoliths and iron age hillforts, all in close proximity to the Icknield Way (and the likely use of hillforts often within a long day's walk of each other as

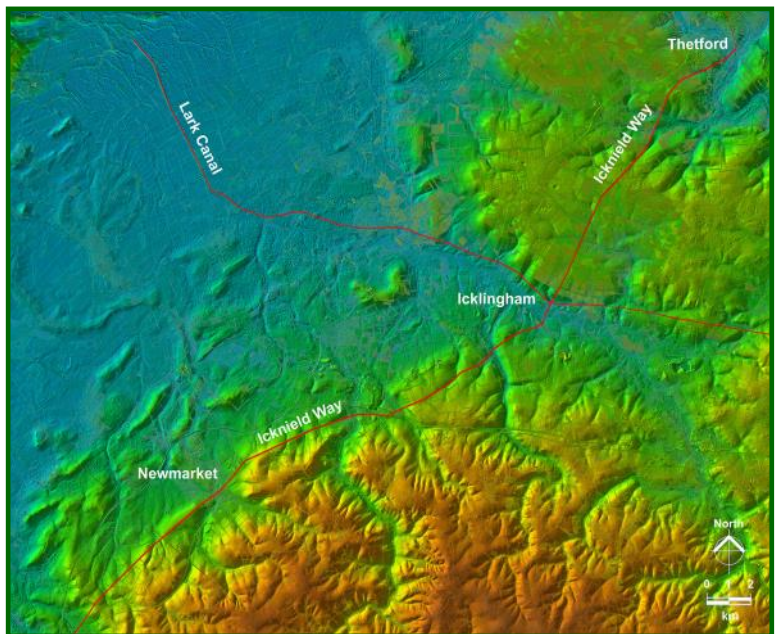
a suitable B&B for humans and beasts!), only a relatively small stretch of the imagination is needed to suggest that these are all interconnected - as is the idea that the family members in one hillfort probably had family members in another.

It has always been human nature to seek other people and to trade with them. Although there are not always records or archaeology to support this idea, especially when we are often dealing with perishable fabrics and wood, it is widely accepted by archaeologists and historians across the world and through time that this is what we do. The evidence hasn't necessarily been discovered yet, but we know our history deeply and innately. Just as the DNA of Cheddar Man took many by surprise, there are many surprises and confirmations yet to come.

N.B. In his book 'The Old Ways' (2012), Robert MacFarlane refers to the archaeologist Christopher Tilley who wrote 'The Phenomenology of Landscape' (1994). In his work, Tilley argues that to understand the sacred landscapes of Britain we need to first understand the ancient paths that link and bypass them. Indeed we do.



A cut-away drawing of a flint mine at Grimes Graves  
© Historic England



LiDAR image showing projected line of Icknield Way  
south-west of Thetford © David Ratledge

## WHAT IS LiDAR?

Since 1998 the Environment Agency has used lasers to scan and map the English landscape from above to help with work such as flood modelling and tracking changing coastlines. But these LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data are also publicly available and have been used to help with everything from building virtual worlds to managing forests.

The use of LiDAR data to reveal the course of Roman roads has been a great success throughout the country. Imagery derived from this data is often able to show clearly the surviving remains of the road agger, terraces, side ditches and cuttings, often where they cannot be identified on the ground through traditional fieldwork. Virtual reality 3D LiDAR models have been used extensively as these enable the viewer to look directly down the line of a road to trace its course. As a result lost roads have been found and many gaps and corrections have been made to the previously known roads.

## IWA PHOTO ARCHIVE

The Committee has received further archives from the widow of Professor Thurstan Shaw including some black-and-white photographs taken by Thurstan when he first walked the Great Chalk Way in the late 1970s. The views have been identified and the photos scanned. Those taken along the western part of the Way (beyond Ivinghoe Beacon) have been sent to the Friends of the Ridgeway for their archives.

## THURSTAN SHAW - A POEM

*Professor Thurstan Shaw, founder Chairman of the Icknield Way Association and our first President was also known to write the occasional poem, often prompted by his musings whilst walking along the Way. His widow, Pamela, is still finding interesting items in Thurstan's archives and she sent us this poem earlier this year.*

### Postscript 1991

When I am gone from earth  
That loved the Icknield Way,  
Think of me, happy, walking,  
Heart lifting, in early May.

Was I am ancient chapman  
With goodies in my bag—  
Seashells and beads and axes  
And other kinds of swag?

A Neolithic shepherd,  
My spear-point tipped with horn,  
Guarding the sheep a-grazing  
Where grew last summer's corn?

Treading the growing trackways  
To seek a neighbouring bride  
Returning with her, homewards  
My chest puffed out with pride?

Such fancies may be idle  
But picture them I must,  
For soon I'll not be walking  
But mingling with the dust.

When I can stride no more  
That loved the Icknield Way,  
Think of me, happy, walking,  
Praising at end of day.

*Professor Shaw died in 2013, aged 98*

## IWA LINKS UP WITH CVS

As Publicity Officer of the IWA, I have undertaken to seek assistance from the voluntary sector in gaining new members, officers and wardens, because we are short of such and need new blood and additional expertise. In particular we have contacted the Council for Voluntary Services.

I have managed to gain links with CVS groups in every county that the IW passes through (Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, and Norfolk) and we have successfully advertise our website and vacancies for posts in Essex and Suffolk, so far, and the others are a work in progress. In response to such, we have had a few enquiries and some posts have already been filled, but there are still a number left. If there is anyone else who wishes to visit our website and seek out the job vacancies please feel free to do so.

*Doug Landman*



## BRECKS LINK

Doug has also renewed our links with the Brecks, Fen Edge and Rivers (BFER) Landscape Partnership. He sent a note around the Committee: 'I have just had the most wonderful chat with Nick Dickson from The Brecks, Fen Edge and Rivers Partnership that are lottery funded until the end of 2024. Their brief is to promote, support and fund any organisation that has any interest in the Brecks including the Icknield Way. He is very interested in the IWA and keen to help us find new volunteers and work with our wardens in the Brecks—and generally to keep in touch with areas/projects of mutual interest'.

Good news, Doug!

# VOLUNTARY ROUTE WARDENS

Maps 1-3	Ivinghoe Beacon to A5	Helen Fletcher-Rogers	hfrogers@dial.pipex.com
Map 4	A5 to Sundon Hills Country Park	Tom Chevalier	info@icknielwaytrail.org.uk
Maps 5,6	Sundon Hills to Hexton-Lilley Rd	Alec Gallagher	alecgallagher701@btinternet.com
Map 7	Lilley Road to Pirton	Lesley Blundell	lesley.blundell@uclmail.net
Maps 8-9	Pirton to Wilbury Hill	Alex Goldie	kathy_alex.goldie@mac.com
Map 10	Wilbury Hill to Baldock	Paul & Elaine Curley	elaine.curley@live.co.uk
Maps 11-15	Baldock town centre to Heydon	David Allard	david.slade.allard@gmail.com
Maps 16-19	Heydon to Linton	Andy Mountain	andymountain.sail@hotmail.co.uk
Maps 20-21	Linton to Willingham Green	Neil Summers	neil336@googlemail.com
Maps 22-27	Willingham Green to Icklingham	Phil Prigg	phil@prigg.co.uk
Maps 28-29	Icklingham to D-house	<b>STILL VACANT—PLEASE CAN YOU HELP?</b>	
Maps 30-32	D-house to Knettishall Heath	<b>STILL VACANT—PLEASE CAN YOU HELP?</b>	
Maps 33-34	Toddington alternative	Tom Chevalier	info@icknielwaytrail.org.uk
Maps 35-36	Thetford Link	<b>STILL VACANT - PLEASE CAN YOU HELP?</b>	

## COMMITTEE CONTACTS

### Chairman: Tom Chevalier

22 Byfield Close, Toddington, Dunstable, LU5 6BH

(01525 873986) [info@icknielwaytrail.org.uk](mailto:info@icknielwaytrail.org.uk)

### Secretary & Membership: Lesley Blundell

7 Church Street, Shillington, Nr Hitchin, SG5 3LH

(01462 711530) [lesley.blundell@uclmail.net](mailto:lesley.blundell@uclmail.net)

### Treasurer: Tim Johnson

4 Ickniel Way, Great Chesterford, Saffron Walden CB10 1FG

(07886 928089) [jtimed.t@gmail.com](mailto:jtimed.t@gmail.com)

### Newsletter Editor: Chris James

56 Back Street, Ashwell, Baldock, SG7 5PE

(01462 742684) [chrisjames56@btinternet.com](mailto:chrisjames56@btinternet.com)

### Website: Tom Chevalier

### Guide Book Sales: Tom Chevalier

**(PLEASE CAN YOU HELP WITH THIS?)**

### Publicity Officer: Doug Landman

[doug.landman@ntlworld.com](mailto:doug.landman@ntlworld.com)

### Development Officer: Clive Beckett

[soniaandclive@hotmail.com](mailto:soniaandclive@hotmail.com)

### Accounts Examiner: David Allard

## WELCOME TO NEW WARDENS!

*Welcome to Andy Mountain, our new route warden on the Essex-Cambs border. Andy has kindly agreed to keep an eye on the route between Heydon and Linton. He lives at Great Chesterford which is very handily located in the middle of this stretch.*

*We are very grateful to James Quantrill for wardening this section of the path for many years, but who has now moved away from the area.*

*Our second new warden is Alec Gallagher who has volunteered to cover the Sundon Hills to Hexton-Lilley Road, even though he lives quite a way off at Potton in Bedfordshire. Bravo Alec!*

*And, news just in, we welcome Paul & Elaine Curley who are keen to help us. They will adopt the section between Wilbury Hill and Baldock.*

*Thank you, all of you, for helping to look after this wonderful and historic route.*