



ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2023

AGM 2023

SATURDAY 14TH OCTOBER

*Davies Memorial Hall
The Street, Herringswell
Suffolk IP28 6ST*

2pm.

**Our meeting will include a talk by
Dr David Ratledge
“The Roman Roads of East Anglia
-recent LIDAR Discoveries”**

*We are delighted that our traditional morning
walk will take place again this year, starting at
10.30am at the Hall. Please gather from
10.00am ready for a prompt start.*

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Welcome to our Autumn 2023 Newsletter!

Although slightly later arriving than usual, I hope you will all enjoy the articles in this issue. I am especially pleased that two of our wardens have sent photos and contributions about their sections of the route and I look forward to receiving others for a future issue. Our wardens are crucial members of the Association's support team and we are most grateful for all they do to help look after our beautiful long-distance path.

The IWA is very pleased that Dr David Ratledge has agreed to present his recent findings to our AGM this year and we thank Doug Landman for inviting him and making the arrangements.

David Ratledge is a former Civil Engineer working predominantly in the design and construction of roads and bridges for over 40 years. At Lancashire County Council he also headed up the county's GIS (Graphic Information System) unit, developing the award-winning online GIS, MARIO. Since his retirement he has been able to devote his time to tracking down lost Roman roads from Hadrian's Wall to Essex .

David has uncovered forgotten Roman buildings, roads and villas all over the country, along with one of the western routes of the Icknield Way. His discoveries are informative and fascinating and are certain to be of particular interest to those who wish to learn more about the long-forgotten and missing history of East Anglia.

Please make a big effort to support this event which marks a welcome return to 'live' AGMs visiting parts of our special Icknield Way Path



HERRINGSWELL

Herringswell is not a place you'd be likely to pass through, unless you are walking the Icknield Way! The village street runs off a quiet back road between the Cambridgeshire village of Kennett and the Suffolk village of Tuddenham St Mary, some six miles north-east of Newmarket .

Earliest records tell us that in the 11th century 'Ulfric gave the manor of Herringswell to the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds' and for most of its history, the village has been owned by the local farmed estate. Today, it comprises a pleasant mixture of larger houses set back from the street and Victorian terraced cottages. Its manor house has also enjoyed a mixed history , especially during the twentieth century. Until the 1960s, the house had been owned by various private families including the Balances/Peeks from Blackheath, London, who rebuilt it in mock-Tudor style in 1901. From 1965, it became a boarding school for children of American and Canadian families. In 1981 the property was sold and became an ashram and from 1985 until 2000 it was used as a Japanese Buddhist boarding school. The house and other buildings have since been converted into apartments.

St Edmunds. In addition, the three bells which had fallen from the tower and smashed were re-cast by Mr Taylor, the famous Loughborough bellfounder.

The church is memorable today for its outstanding series of stained glass windows.



Spring at Herringswell
Cambridge Stained Glass 1992

The Icknield Way Path approaches Herringswell from the south after its (briefly) noisy crossing beneath the A14 dual carriageway and a commercial stretch along the Slade Bottom by-way. More peaceful and rural environs are soon restored however as the Way follows a good track bounded by trees and plantations for almost two miles into the village.



The Icknield Way Path south of Herringswell, with its characteristic 'hedges' of contorted Scots Pines



The parish church is one of four in Suffolk dedicated to the Saxon Saint Ethelbert, once King of East Anglia. Much of the early church, including its thatched roof was destroyed by fire during a morning service in late February 1869. The fire engine from Mildenhall did not arrive until three hours after the fire was notified—in time to save some nearby cottages which had also caught alight but not in time to save the church which was almost totally lost, apart from a new organ and a few fittings. The local parishioners, though few in number, at once set about raising the funds necessary to rebuild. A well-known London architect Arthur Blomfield gave advice on design, two local contractors did the building work and stonework was carried out by a mason from Bury

We look forward to re-visiting Herringswell at this year's AGM—why not join us?

NEWMARKET AND ITS HEATH

With our AGM being held at Herringswell again this year, an opportunity arises of looking briefly at the history of a nearby town and cultural landscape very much a feature of the historic Icknield Way.

From the earliest times people travelled the Icknield Way across Newmarket Heath. The fresh water sources in the area originally drew people to settle here. Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age peoples, Romans and Anglo-Saxons all left archaeological evidence of their occupation in the Newmarket area. The lasting legacy of the Anglo-Saxons is the gigantic earthwork known as 'The Devil's Dyke', built during the 6th - 7th century AD, which runs beside the famous race-course and stretches for 7.5 miles between the villages of Reach and Woodditton.



Looking from the Devil's Dyke across
Newmarket Racecourse

It is highly likely that horses were raced on Newmarket Heath by the Iron Age Iceni tribe: the Romans recorded that the tribe bred, sold and sometimes exported, fine horses and dogs. Records show that the Anglo-Saxons had horseracing in their culture (although probably not as an organised sport!)

Newmarket gained its Royal Market Charter in 1200 AD. Its twice - weekly market and later annual fairs supported the growth of the town. The economy of medieval Newmarket was based around farming and the hospitality business. Long before racegoers came to the town, there were many little one-room alehouses (over 40 at one time) and several larger inns, all eager to welcome weary travellers along the Icknield Way. Brewing ale was then a particularly important trade as water was generally considered unsafe to drink. Everyone, even children, drank ale. The medieval townsfolk rented small farms on 'burgage plots' which were strips of land running off and at right-angles to the High Street.

The town's association with organised horse-racing dates back well over 400 years. Back in 1605, James I first came

to stay in Newmarket, attracted by the open land of the Heath which possessed all the attributes needed to stage his favourite sporting activities: coursing, hunting, the racing of horses and good accommodation. The annual 'Town Plate' was the first organised race which was run to an official set of rules, or Articles, set out by King Charles II on 16th October 1665 and this made them universally binding. Therefore, it is considered that all formal, modern horse racing dates from this time, more than 350 years ago.

After horseracing began to be organised, the medieval burgage plots were essential for the creation of the numerous stables in Newmarket. These plots of land already had room for the construction of both a dwelling house and stables at the rear. Smaller plots could be joined together to create larger establishments. Likewise, the huge area of heathland surrounding the town provided space and resources for the growth of more stables and the all-important race courses.

This huge Heath is known as Newmarket Training Grounds and is owned by the Jockey Club of Great Britain. It is the largest area of cultivated chalk heath in the world and extends to 2,500 acres. Newmarket Racecourse is the second oldest in the UK (and the world) having been formally established in 1636. Today, the town is the largest racehorse training centre in Britain, the largest racehorse breeding centre and home to major British racing institutions responsible for listing and selling some of the world's foremost racehorses, breeding stock and stallions.

The Heath is an important leisure resource to the people of the town and to visitors. Although used daily by over 3,000 of the town's equine residents for their morning exercise, public access is allowed after 1 pm everyday (on Sundays from 11 am onwards). Five promoted walks of varying lengths around the heath provide panoramic views of the town where you can see iconic buildings such as The Millennium Stand at the Rowley Mile Racecourse as well as the roof of the famed sales ring at Tattersalls.

A large part of the race course, extending to 670 acres, is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest because chalk heath is now an especially rare habitat in Britain.

The Icknield Way Path avoids the major road through Newmarket by taking a very attractive route south and east of the town through the villages of Stetchworth, Cheveley, Ashley, Dalham and Gazeley before it crosses the A14 and proceeds northwards towards Herringswell. The path passes alongside several studs where their paddocks, fencing and hedges are features totally distinctive to this part of the Path and found nowhere else.

CHILTERN WALKS

IWA members at the western end of the Icknield Way might be interested in enjoying some walks in unfamiliar terrain during October.

The autumn **Chilterns Walking Festival** will take place 14 – 29 October. The walks team is busy building a programme of guided walks led by knowledgeable guides and taking in the beautiful Chilterns landscape.

For the latest information and updates go to walkingfestival@chilternsaonb.org

ALL ON A SUMMER'S EVENING



At the end of July, Alex Goldie, our warden for the Icknield Way between Pirton, west of Hitchin and Wilbury Hill at Letchworth, led a special evening walk looking for Barn Owls. Following an excellent meal at the pub in Pirton they walked up Wood Lane to Tingley Wood.

This stunning view is from the wood looking back towards Pirton and over into south Bedfordshire.

SHRUBS ON THE CHALK

How many of you managed to identify the three shrubs on the chalk shown in the last News? A very prompt reply was received from Roy & Sue Wheeler:

1. Dogwood
2. Old Man's Beard or Traveller's Joy
3. Wayfaring Tree

So, at least two people read the newsletter!

NEW SIGNAGE FOR TRAIL AT BYGRAVE

Volunteers working with the Hertfordshire Countryside Management Service recently visited the historic parish of Bygrave, which has a network of footpaths providing some lovely walking routes that can be accessed directly from Baldock, allowing users to travel from the edge of the town and out into the rolling countryside, almost entirely avoiding roads.

They installed some new waymarking posts to improve navigation and access to the wider network of rights of way, especially onto the Icknield Way Trail.

On this part of the route, the Trail leads north from Baldock following a track along the northern boundary of Bygrave parish. A short stretch uphill along a road then links to an excellent byway, from where there are marvellous views into three counties. This track leads gently back downhill into Ashwell, another beautiful historic village. From Ashwell, the Trail follows Ashwell Street into Royston.

With thanks to North Herts Council for including this item in their News Update



Looking north from Ashwell Street to the Greensand Ridge in south Cambridgeshire.

GREAT CHALK WAY NEWS

Doug Landman reports that the design for the information boards for the Great Chalk Way has been agreed. He is still looking at additional sites with various landowners along the entire network. Dorset County Council is approving 2 or 3 sites with the consensus of the Great Chalk Way working group. The group will meet in October to discuss these plus the necessary funding and the proposed launch event for next year to take place on the Dunstable Downs.

FANCY A WALK?

Please contact leader to confirm meeting place and to tell them you plan to join their walk.

Sunday 8th October

Pegsdon Hills, Bedfordshire

Junction Pegsdon Way & Apsley End Road
TL118302 / SG5 3JS

All day circular 10.7m/17.2km



Chris Young 07508 471928

North Herts Ramblers

Sunday 29th October

Ivinghoe Ridgeway Beds/Bucks

Pitstone Hill Car Park SP954149

All day circular 10.5m/16,9km



Gabriella Lovelace 07788 505045

North Herts Ramblers

Sunday 26th November

Weston - Clothall- Wallington, Herts

Fore Street, Weston near pond TL258301

All day circular 10m/16.1km



Colin Reith 07917 585428

North Herts Ramblers

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome to the following new members:

Wesley Aten of Chicago

Wesley has joined as a Life Member.

James Lloyd of Saffron Walden

James is a keen cyclist who has offered to be a warden along the Icknield Way Trail

Alasdair Maceachern of Hitchin.

A WARDEN'S NEWS

In the past ten months the section of the Icknield Way Path between the M1 motorway and the Hexton-Lilley road has seen some remedial action. Broken or weatherworn IWA discs have been replaced. One disc on the route which was pointing in completely the wrong direction has been replaced, and two discs near South Bedfordshire Golf Club which were not on the route at all and discovered by accident have been removed. One or two new discs have been added in locations where there was some ambiguity about the route on the ground, and one or two old-style metal discs which duplicated new discs have been removed. Some extra discs were added where required for walkers travelling westward.

Two wooden way-marker posts, one northwest of Upper Sundon, the other south of Streatley, were found to have rotted at the base and were both lying on the ground. These were reported to the highway authority, Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) in November 2022. As of September 2023, CBC had taken no action, although some public-spirited citizen has strapped the latter post to the kissing gate with cable ties.

In April, foliage obstructing way-markers was cleared as far as was practically possible.

One or two amendments to the Walkers' Guide have been suggested. One concerns an ambiguity in the route northwest of Upper Sundon, another concerns the hospice south of Streatley which is now called the Keech Hospice. It is no longer Betty Robinson House, as in the sixth edition of the Guide, and definitely not the Pasque Hospice as shown on a CBC finger post by Streatley pond!



**The picturesque village pond at Streatley, Bedfordshire
(Photo:Alec Gallagher)**

This section of the Icknield Way Path has only two refuelling stations: the Red Lion at Upper Sundon and The Chequers at Streatley (which, if you want to avoid the embarrassment that I suffered, is pronounced Strettley!) Both pubs are open from midday, seven days a week. There are no shops, cafes or public toilets on this stretch of the route. There is a solitary bus service to and from Upper Sundon but only once or twice a day; the service to Streatley is only slightly better. If you are going to rely on buses, plan ahead!

This stretch of the path scales the heights (such as they are in Bedfordshire); there are fine views north and west from the Sundon Hills and west from Galley Hill. On a sunny day you can't beat it. I like my patch!

Alec Gallagher

VOLUNTARY ROUTE WARDENS

Maps 1-3	Ivinghoe Beacon to A5	Helen Fletcher-Rogers	hfrogers@dial.pipex.com
Maps 4, 5(part)	A5 to Sundon Hills Country Park	Tom Chevalier	info@icknielwaytrail.org.uk
Maps 5-6	Sundon Hills to Hexton-Lilley Road	Alec Gallagher	alecgallagher701@btinternet.com
Map 7	Lilley Road to Pirton	Lesley Blundell	Lesley.blundell@uclmail.net
Map 8-9	Pirton to Wilbury Hill	Alex Goldie	kathy_alex.goldie@mac.com
Map 10	Wilbury Hill to Baldock	Elaine & Paul 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	Tim Johnston	jtimed.t@gmail.com
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	Lawrence Rix	rix.lawrence@googlemail.com
Maps 30-32	D-house to Knettishall Heath	Lawrence Rix	rix.lawrence@googlemail.com
Maps 33-34	Toddington Alternative	Tom Chevalier	info@icknielwaytrail.org.uk
Maps 35-36	Thetford Link	Lawrence Rix	rix.lawrence@googlemail.com

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AUTUMN BIRDS

During your walks along the Ickniel Way in autumn and winter, look out for flocks of 'open country' birds such as Linnets, Skylarks and Yellowhammers which often band together and forage for food during the leaner winter months. If you are lucky, you might also come across Lapwings or Golden Plover which have come south from their breeding grounds.



Above left: Linnets. Above right: Yellowhammer

