



# ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

### SPRING 2024

***Save the Date!***  
***FORTIETH***  
***ANNIVERSARY***  
***AGM***  
***SATURDAY***  
***19TH OCTOBER***

***Market Hill Rooms, Royston***  
***2pm.***

***Anniversary Guest Lecturer***  
***Mary-Ann Ochota***  
***Archaeologist &***  
***Anthropologist***

***Our traditional morning walk will***  
***start at 10.30am***  
***(location to be confirmed)***

### *Welcome to our Spring Newsletter!*

This edition brings sad news about two very long-standing members who have died recently. David Allard and Janet Moreton each gave of their time and dedication to support the Association in its early days and, in David's case, as our Accounts Examiner until his death last autumn. We will miss them both. If you know someone who can be our new Accounts Examiner, please contact Tim, our treasurer (details under Committee Contacts).

Those members present at last Year's AGM will remember a great occasion at Herringswell with an excellent and fascinating speaker. Please note the date for this year's 40th Anniversary meeting to be held at Royston. We are delighted that Mary-Ann Ochota has agreed to be our Guest Lecturer.

Elsewhere in the newsletter are items about an anniversary walk, the exciting purchase of land along our route west of Hitchin which includes a large hillfort, and the renewing of GLEAM's campaign to ban motorised vehicles from our green lanes. The photo below is taken between Hitchin and Pegsdon. How lucky we are that this beautiful track has not yet been turned into a mud-bath by drivers of 4x4 vehicles! Other historic cross-country routes have not been so lucky—take a look at GLEAM's report to see photo's of some truly awful damage elsewhere.

Our Icknield Way milestones are hopefully having a wash and brush up ready for our 40th Anniversary and there is an update about the Great Chalk Way.

Read on!

*Chris*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

AGM 2023 at Herringswell	2
Tributes—David Allard & Janet Moreton	3
John's 70-year Walk	4
Hexton Hills	4
Icknield Way Milestones	5
Calling Time on Off-roading	5
Voluntary Route Wardens	6
Committee Contacts	6
Great Chalk Way	6



# AGM 2023 AT HERRINGSWELL

Our 2023 AGM promised to be a great occasion with a large number of people booked in for the special afternoon talk.

Before this, though, in bright sunshine a smaller group enjoyed the traditional walk, led by Phil Prigg, starting from the village hall in Herringswell. Phil led us along the Icknield Way Path going due south from the village. Here it forms a straight, level bridleway passing tree belts and large arable fields. After about 2.2Km we turned north-west alongside an area labelled on the map 'Kentford Heath' but from which all vestiges of heath had long since disappeared! Here was another straight bridleway which continued for another kilometre or so to meet the road going south to Kentford. From here, Phil's route continued in the same trajectory along The Carrops until we turned eastwards again. Thus, Phil had taken us around an almost equilateral triangle through some of the area's most characteristic landscape—flattish, rectilinear fields, plantations providing windbreaks—with the valley of the River Kennett to the south. Once again, we had enjoyed seeing another varied part of Icknield Way country.



**Some of the members enjoying a pause, in the sunshine, on the Icknield Way Path south of Herringswell**

**(Photo: Chris James)**

After lunch, some forty people started to arrive for our afternoon meeting which began with the most fascinating presentation given by Dr David Ratledge. 'Roman Roads in East Anglia— LIDAR Discoveries' introduced to us new discoveries made using this pioneering technique which converts pulses of light into pictorial maps using clever computer software.

Dr Ratledge explained that the past ten years have seen a transformation in our understanding of Britain's Roman

road network as a consequence of LIDAR data becoming freely available. 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. The Ordnance Survey's Map of Roman Britain has many gaps and omissions for East Anglia but - thanks to Lidar - we now have a comprehensive understanding of the area's earliest highway network.

Our Publicity Officer, Doug Landman, was keen for Dr Ratledge to show us that there was another route parallel to but west of the Peddars Way (which was constructed as a military road). Dr Ratledge believed that the presence of nine Roman villas located west of such a route (where the land was good for farming) was too much of a coincidence for there not to be something linking them together for trading and supply.

The talk prompted some lively discussion and there was plenty to talk about during tea!

Tom Chevalier welcomed everyone to the first face-to-face AGM for a couple of years and invited officers to give their reports. Tim Johnson gave his first report as treasurer and reported a healthy balance in the accounts of around £11,600.00. The meeting heard that Guide Book sales continue to be the Association's main source of income but that the price of the book had been increased due to increases in printing and mailing costs and Paypal fees.

Lesley was pleased to say that the Association had attracted 22 new members since the previous AGM.

Doug had been busy securing publicity for the IWA in local newspapers and village newsletters. He had also continued to keep the IWA connected to potential sources of volunteers through the Councils for Voluntary Services along the route. Both he and Tom had put a lot of time into the Great Chalk Way project during the year.

Tom had made improvements to the three websites he is managing (one for the Icknield Way Path, another for the Trail and a third for the Great Chalk Way).

All the officers agreed to stand for a further year but Lesley gave advanced notice of her intention to stand down at the AGM in 2024.

## TRIBUTES—DAVID ALLARD AND JANET MORETON



David Allard  
(Photo : Royston Ramblers)

David Allard was born in 1933 and died last September whilst out walking, aged 90. In earlier life he worked for Barclays Bank in Nigeria, then for the Midland Bank back home in Watford for a short time before being transferred to Royston where he settled in the late 1960s.

Countryside walking had always been a passion and he joined the Ramblers Association when he was 17. David established the Royston & District Ramblers Club in 1983. He also became the RA representative for 8 local parishes, working enthusiastically to protect their rights-of-way. Several local farmers will remember his visits about footpaths vividly!

Through his connection with footpaths along the Icknield Way, he became involved with our Association quite early on, helping to plan the Royston section of the path, then becoming a member of the Executive Committee before being appointed as Accounts Examiner from 1995. David continued helping the IWA with this until his death. From the mid 1990s, he was also voluntary warden of a long stretch of the Icknield Way Path covering Royston and adjacent parishes. In this role he was meticulous in submitting regular reports and in ensuring that any problems were reported to the relevant highway authorities.

David supported not only our organisation but was a stalwart of Royston Ramblers, Royston's WEA group, the Royston Local History Society and the Beds & Herts Churches Preservation Trust.

The award of a British Empire Medal in 2023 for services to the community was very well-deserved. Earlier, in 2018, David was awarded a certificate by the Ramblers Association in 2018 for outstanding efforts in promoting the benefits of walking. And in 2020, when group activities were prohibited by the Covid pandemic, he decided to walk the 194 miles of the Hertfordshire Way unaccompanied.

David did not own a car and he was renowned in the IWA for being able to turn up at some of our more remote AGMs, having travelled by train and/or bus, then walked several miles to our meeting venues—in time to join our morning walks.

David died doing what he loved the most and, along with many others, we will miss him.

## JANET MORETON

In January, we lost another long-time supporter of the Icknield Way Association. Although brought up in Staffordshire, Janet won a place at Newnham College Cambridge to study Natural Sciences in 1961 and stayed in Cambridge for the rest of her life. Janet loved walking from an early age and developed a keen interest in and love for wild flowers and the countryside in general. A like-minded fellow student, Roger, became her husband in 1965. They shared a commitment to walking, footpaths and the Ramblers Association, surveying many paths within Cambridge and beyond. As footpath secretaries, Janet and Roger walked an astonishing number of miles each week surveying and checking footpaths and reporting to the county council the problems they had found.

Janet was a member of the Association's Steering Committee during the 1980s and was a strong supporter of our aims as well giving us lots of practical advice and suggestions about our proposed walkers' route. Janet's primary loyalty was to walking in Cambridgeshire, however, and she and Roger went on to help devise other long-distance routes such as the Fen Rivers Way and the West Anglian Way.

Sadly, their extensive walking was reduced when Roger suffered a stroke in 2013 and when Janet's Parkinsonism started taking its toll but they would both attend our AGM walks whenever they could.

We extend our warmest condolences to Roger.

# JOHN'S 70-YEAR WALK

One of our members, the Revd John Simmons, has decided to go on a long walk from Thame in Oxfordshire to Thetford in Norfolk. He will follow the Phoenix Trail, part of the Ridgeway and *all* of the Icknield Way—140 miles.

Why is he doing it? As he explains in his excellent promotional leaflet: "I will celebrate my 70th birthday, give thanks for my deliverance from several serious illnesses, raise funds for *Diabetes UK* and continue my progress walking some of the UK's long distance paths."

John will begin his walk on 5th May at the church in Oxfordshire where he was ordained as a church minister back in 1992. He will continue through the Icknield Way Parish of which he was Rector at the turn of the century and where he will preach on the middle Sunday of the walk (at St Nicholas church in Elmdon). The two-week walk will be completed with John's visit to a church service in Norfolk.

If you would like to support John in his venture there are one or two ways you could help:

- pray that his health will remain stable through this long hike
- visit [John Simmons is fundraising for Diabetes UK \(justgiving.com\)](#) and make a donation
- walk with John (and his brother) any days - perhaps the bank holiday weekend - you would be most welcome to do so
- offer / recommend cheap accommodation

**Here is a rough outline of John's walk:**

**May 5** Thame

**May 8** Toddington

**May 10** Baldock

**May 12** preach at Elmdon church

**May 16** Herringswell

**May 19** Thetford

***Do contact him for further details and join him for some of the walk if you can.***

07813 559654 [jgsimmons54@gmail.com](mailto:jgsimmons54@gmail.com)

# HEXTON HILLS

In 2023, an important acquisition was made by Natural England with the purchase at auction of the southern part (240 hectares) of the Hexton Manor Estate on the Hertfordshire/Bedfordshire border.

The new landholding is located within the Chiltern Hills National Landscape Area and includes Ravensburgh Castle Hill Fort which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It is strategically located between Deacon Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to the east, and Barton Hills NNR & SSSI to the west. In combination, this network of sites provides a significant expanse of beautiful Chilterns landscape.

The estate comprises a patchwork of arable fields, chalk grasslands and numerous woodlands including both mixed broadleaf and conifer plantations, some of which are designated as ancient.



**Ravensburgh Castle beneath its mantle of planted trees  
(Photo: Ancient Monuments)**

It is early days in the management and restoration of this new land by Natural England but anyone interested can see/hear more about it at

[Nature Recovery at Hexton - full length version \(youtube.com\)](#)



**(Right): Hexton Chalk Pit Nature Reserve  
—part of the new Hexton Hills land in the Chilterns  
(Photo: Chris James)**

# ICKNIELD WAY MILESTONES

The Executive Committee have been discussing how best to restore the Icknield Way's three milestones to their former, brighter glory. The three stones are located at the start of the path at Ivinghoe Beacon, the approximate mid-point at Balsham and on the approach to Knettishall Heath Country Park. All three stones have been in position for several decades and have weathered naturally to the point where lettering is becoming less clear than it once was.



**The milestone at Balsham not long after installation in the early 1980s.**

(Photo: Chris James)



**The milestone at Knettishall Heath - more recently and virtually illegible!**

(Photo: Chris James)

Professional cleaning and restoration of the lettering has been investigated with a stone mason, along with discussions with National Trust colleagues (who have much more stone than the IWA to look after!). Following advice, executive committee members will experiment during the summer with water and brush and gentle use of sand paper on the stones at Ivinghoe Beacon and Knettishall. This will hopefully go some way towards making the stones more legible without spoiling their natural weathering.



# CALLING TIME ON OFF-ROADING

This is the title of a recent report published by GLEAM, the Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement. In the summary, GLEAM says:

“Green lanes are precious, historic features of the landscape. They are an essential part of the rights of way network for walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and carriage-drivers. They are part of wildlife habitats and local ecosystems. Farmers, land managers and residents use them to access their land and property. Seven thousand miles of them, including in national parks, national landscape areas and on national trails, are currently open to off-roading by 4x4, motorbike and quad bike drivers.

Off-roading destroys surfaces and is a public nuisance for people on foot, horse or cycle, including people who are disabled. It disrupts farming activities and brings noise, pollution and depletion of nature into tranquil, unspoilt areas.

The highway law on green lanes is archaic. It goes back to when the only vehicles using highways of any kind were horse-drawn. Only recently has the law made any distinction between a horse-drawn cart and a 4x4 or a motorbike<sup>1</sup>. Highway and national park authorities have powers to close green lanes to 4x4s and motorbikes by means of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), but these Orders are rarely used.

The UK and Welsh Governments recognise that off-roading is a problem but at present (2023) they have no plans to stop it. Ministers and Defra think that new official guidance will make TROs cheaper, less complicated and easier to use. GLEAM's opinion, based on long experience all over the country, is that this will not work. Green lanes play an important part in schemes for family-friendly active travel, but not if the lanes are open to motor vehicles.

**New legislation is needed to prohibit non-essential motor vehicles from all green lanes.”**

GLEAM's sobering and very timely report can be found here: <http://www.gleam-uk.org/news/calling-time-on-off-roading/>

**Left: The fabulous view north from Therfield Heath at Royston**

*Come along and join us for the morning walk on Saturday 19th October and (weather permitting!) you can enjoy similar great views of countryside along the Icknield Way.*

# 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	a.lecgallagher701@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	<b>VACANT—please can anyone help warden this section?</b>	
Maps 16-19	Heydon to Linton	Tim Johnson	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	Laurence Rix	rix.laurence@googlemail.com
Maps 30-32	D-house to Knettishall Heath	Laurence Rix	rix.laurence@googlemail.com
Maps 33-34	Toddington Alternative	Tom Chevalier	info@icknielwaytrail.org.uk
Maps 35-36	Thetford Link	Laurence Rix	rix.laurence@googlemail.com

## 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 (until AGM 2024): Lesley Blundell

7 Church Street, Shillington, Nr Hitchin, SG5 3LH (01462 711530)

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

### Secretary (from AGM 2024): Laurence Rix

40 Sycamore Close, St Ippolyts, Hitchin SG4 7SN (07984 308834)

[Rix.laurence@googlemail.com](mailto:Rix.laurence@googlemail.com)

### Membership (from AGM 2024): Lesley Blundell

Contact details as above.

### Treasurer: Tim Johnson

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

[Jtimed.t@gmail.com](mailto:Jtimed.t@gmail.com)

### Editor: Chris James

56 Back Street, Ashwell, Baldock, SG7 5PE (01462 742684)

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

### Website: Tom Chevalier

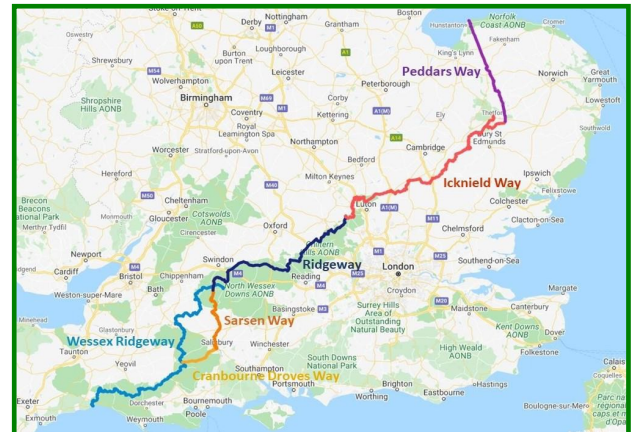
### Guide Book Sales: Bridget Chevalier

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: The Association urgently needs someone to undertake this role. If you can help please contact Tim (above).**

## GREAT CHALK WAY



Discussions have continued between the partners of the Great Chalk Way Project (Ickniel Way Association, Friends of the Ridgeway, Dorset County Council for the Wessex Ridgeway and Norfolk County Council for the Peddars Way) and funding is now in place to install eight information boards along the 360-mile route including those at Knettishall Heath, Dunstable Downs and Ivinghoe Beacon.

Bill Bailey, comedian, actor and keen supporter of rural access has agreed to be Patron of The Great Chalk Way.

Now plans are 'hotting up' for a launch event at Dunstable Downs in September 2024.

More details about this will be published on our website and in the Autumn Newsletter.