



THE ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

Lilley (Hertfordshire)

The 'Lilley Arms'

A walk across a lovely, rolling, Chalk upland farm-scape with wide views.

These details are available at: <https://icknieldwaypath.co.uk/route/hertfordshire/> where there is a link to the [OS Maps](#) route map.

Lilley is an attractive 'estate' village and many of the thatched cottages bear the silver lion rampant crest of the Sowerby family who once owned the Putteridge estate of which the village was part. Built in 1705 as a coaching inn, much of the historic character of the *Lilley Arms* has survived, along with its tradition of offering hospitality to travellers by providing bed and breakfast accommodation. Tranquil gardens with fountains and a patio can be enjoyed during the summer and there are cosy log fires in winter. Dogs are allowed in the bar and gardens but not in the food areas.

Advertising itself as "worth passing a few pubs for", the Lilley Arms is a free house serving a range of hand-pulled real ales. There is an extensive menu of home-cooked, seasonal pub food, including a choice of vegetarian options and the pub's Sunday roast lunches are so popular it is advisable to book in advance. Meals are not served on Sunday nights.

Opening times: Check with the pub

How to get there: Lilley lies 2 miles north-east of Luton. The village is situated just off the A505 between Luton and Hitchin or can be reached by following minor roads from the A6 at Streatley. The pub is on West Street, a no-through-road in the centre of the village, near the church.

Parking: There is limited parking in a small courtyard to the rear of the pub, or roadside parking in front. There is also a hitching rail for horses.

Length of the walk: 5 miles (8km) (short-cuts available).

Map: OS Landranger 166 'Luton, Hertford and surrounding area' or OS Explorer 193 'Luton and Stevenage' (inn GR 118265).

The Walk

From the pub the walk turns left, along the no through road. Past a thatched cottage on the right, the road continues as a wide and often rutted track. The walk follows the track ahead where a farm road comes in from the right, after which the track bears left, then right, around the edge of Ward's Wood. Along this stretch there are wide views across open farmland and in the spring the wood is full of primroses and bluebells. Over a rise the track runs down to a cross-tracks, where the walk turns right along a field-edge track with good views of nearby Galley Hill, until, eventually, another major cross-tracks is reached.

Here, the route turns right, along the Icknield Way Path. Within a short distance the track runs under the National Grid pylons and continues to a metal gate next to a road. Through a gap past the end of a gate, the walk follows the road ahead. At Treasure's Grove, where the road bends sharply left towards Hexton the walk continues straight ahead along the Icknield



Way Path heading towards Telegraph Hill. Through a small former car park, a short-cut back to Lilley can be taken by turning right, along a field-edge path. The main walk, however, keeps ahead along a field edge track to the corner, from where it goes straight on, through woods. Just past two magnificent, mature beech trees the track reaches a Y-junction. Here, a second short-cut follows the track to the right.

The main walk bears slightly left and ahead as it climbs fairly steeply to the top of [Telegraph Hill](#), named after the wooden semaphore signal station which once stood here. In winter there are extensive views through the hedges across the Bedfordshire plain to the north. (In summer, the view is largely obscured by foliage). Over the rise, continue on this to where the Icknield Way Path bears left and ahead on a broad track, but this circular walk turns right, on a bridleway. On the other side of a small wood, it follows a track across wide, arable fields that used to be open down land. Known as [Lilley Hoo](#), in the 17th century a racecourse was established on this flat area and meetings were popular social occasions in the county. Today, the whole plateau is covered by acres of cereal crops, in which some of the ancient trackways have sunk out of sight.

At the corner of a hedgerow, the main walk is joined by the second short-cut coming in from the right. From here, the walk keeps ahead along a track and hedge which, eventually, passes under the National Grid pylon. Ignoring the permissive path to the right, it continues ahead on the track which keeps to the right hand side of a wood. Stay on the path beyond the end of the tree line, ignoring the first fingerpost on the right, signposted to Lilley, and continue ahead towards Hollybush Hill. At the next fingerpost, signposted to The Baulk, turn sharply right towards The Baulk and follow a footpath through some trees. Emerging at a small clearing, continue forward on a path that descends steeply into the valley, with views of Lilley below.

At the bottom, the walk continues ahead at a junction, where the first shortcut comes in from the right. From here, a hedged track runs up to join a drive which is followed to the road. Here, the walk turns left and follows the road through the village back to West Street and the *Lilley Arms*.