



# ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2025

### AGM 2025

**SATURDAY 18TH OCTOBER**

**Wilkinson Church Hall**

**Toddington LU5 6BP**

**Meet at the hall at 10.30am for  
morning walk**

**Afternoon talk at 2pm**

**Guest Speaker:**

**Dr Wendy Morrison**

**Heritage & Archaeology Manager for  
Chilterns National Landscape**

**See page 2 for information and booking**

**Refreshments**

**AGM at 3.30pm**

### *Welcome to our Autumn newsletter*

The past year has been slightly quieter than 2024 (no Great Chalk Way launch event or Anniversary AGM to plan!) but progress has nevertheless been achieved and some helpful contacts made. Contributions from several members of the Executive Committee provide interesting information about all of this—read on to find out.

But most important of all, please note the date of the AGM, book your place for a fascinating talk from our guest Speaker—see page 2—and come along on the morning walk. Toddington is a new AGM venue and has much to offer.

*Chris James*

## GREAT CHALK WAY - UPDATE

At the 2024 AGM the Executive Committee agreed to fund initiatives for the Great Chalk Way and National Trail status. The GCW launch was covered in the Spring Newsletter and this included a photo of the GCW information board we installed at Dunstable Downs. We have since installed new GCW information boards at the start and end of the Icknield Way—at Ivinghoe Beacon and Knettishall Heath.



**The new information board at Ivinghoe Beacon**

**(Photo: National Trust)**

These boards give an overview of the entire GCW route, including the Icknield Way as the key ancient link between the Ridgeway and Peddars Way. Our Icknield Way Association founder, Professor Thurstan Shaw, created the vision for the GCW and we are delighted to have found an opportunity to promote this in our 40th year.

*Tim Johnson*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Toddington—a village in south Bedfordshire	2
AGM Lecture—information & booking	2
A New Information Board and an Old Milestone	3
New Members	3
Along the Icení Way around West Norfolk	4
National Trail Status—update	4
Path Maintenance around Toddington	5
Voluntary Wardens	6
Committee Contacts	6
Brecks News	6

# TODDINGTON - a village in south Bedfordshire

Toddington is a large village and civil parish in the county of Bedfordshire, situated 5 miles north-north-west of Luton, 4 miles north of Dunstable and 35 miles north-north-west of London.

The village lies on a hill formed of glacial sand and gravel above a layer of glacial till on top of chalky Gault Clay which was laid down about 100 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. The hill is just over 154 m (505 feet) high and the village is about 30 m (almost 100 feet) higher than other Mid-Bedfordshire villages and towns. The land falls sharply away from the village to the north and east and a river, the Flitt, runs through the parish, entering in the south and flowing due north past Mill Farm. A water mill was in operation here until the early twentieth century.

Toddington is thought to have Anglo-Saxon origins, its name meaning, in Old English, 'Hill of Tuda's people'. It is mentioned in Domesday Book. But then the Normans arrived and built a motte-and-bailey castle here which still remains as the mound at Conger Hill.



**Conger Hill, also known as Toddington Castle**  
(Photo: Castles and Fortifications of England & Wales)

Until 'modern' times, Toddington was deeply rooted within its agricultural landscape which provided its local prosperity. In 1912, The Victoria County History stated that the parish of Toddington contained 5,535½ acres, of which 1,195¼ were arable land producing wheat, barley, oats, beans and peas, 2,524½ were permanent grass, and 113 acres were woods and plantations.

Sadly, the agricultural land was pushed back by development during the later 20th and early 21st centuries so that the village's connection to its agrarian past is no longer as apparent. However, Toddington's decline as a market town began before then, in the latter part of the 18th century due to competition from other local market

centres and this wasn't helped when the new railway bypassed the town altogether in the 19th century. But this decline did Toddington a favour by helping to preserve its historic character.

Toddington is built round a large village green around which sit the parish church and four of the village's six public houses.



**The village green at Toddington**  
(Photo: New Build Homes)

There is an interesting mix of building forms, styles and traditional constructional materials, with examples of thatch, timber-framing, old clay roof tiles, 19th century roof slate, and a tradition of high-quality brick building into the early 20th century.

## AGM LECTURE

The AGM will begin with a talk by our special guest speaker, Dr Wendy Morrison, on the topic **'The Chilterns Heritage & Archaeology Partnership; What's that CHAP been doing?'**

Following a very successful project investigating hill forts along the Chilterns, the Chilterns Conservation Board decided to support archaeology more permanently — through the **Chilterns Heritage & Archaeology Partnership**.

The talk will be free of charge (including to non-members) and refreshments will be provided. **However, space is limited and it is essential that places are booked** by contacting Lawrence Rix at [secretary@icknielldwaypath.co.uk](mailto:secretary@icknielldwaypath.co.uk)

## A new information board and an old milestone

Those of you familiar with the eastern end of the Icknield Way will know that the route finishes (or begins, if you prefer) at one of its most attractive sections— Knettishall Heath Nature Reserve. This beautiful Breckland reserve is managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

In June this year, I had the great pleasure of meeting three of their staff— Sam, David, and Collin—who had agreed to install an information board for the Great Chalk Way (GCW) at the point where the Icknield Way links up with the Peddars Way. This is one of two new boards sponsored by our Association and one of five that are now in place along the GCW route.

Sam had selected an excellent location, so David and Collin set about assembling and installing the board like people who had done this many times before. My role, it became clear, was to keep out of the way and watch them do their stuff. Embarrassingly, I proved to be perfectly matched to the task of watching other people work! Less than two hours later, a shiny new Great Chalk Way information board was in place.



**The new Great Chalk Way information board now in position at the Icknield Way /Peddars Way junction at Knettishall Heath**

**(Photo: Lawrence Rix)**

As a bonus, David assured me that he would be able to find the Icknield Way milestone which is located alongside the path about 800m south of the end of the route. I had failed to find it earlier in the year when I went on a trip to clean it but David took me straight to it. He said that, as the Heath is managed as a nature reserve, the hedgerows, bushes and ferns are allowed to grow during spring and

summer because they provide habitat for birds and insects. This means that our stone disappears under the overgrowth! David kindly cleared enough vegetation to ensure that the stone is visible to anyone looking for it and promised to clear it more vigorously during the winter when the brambles will be free of any nesting birds.



**The Icknield Way stone discovered beneath the brambles**

**(Photo: Lawrence Rix)**

This is very good news and we are very grateful for all the help and support we have received from Sam Norris and her team at Knettishall Heath.

Of course, it means that I'll now have to get on and clean the stone!

*Lawrence Rix*

## NEW MEMBERS

The Association is delighted to welcome the following new members:

Glenys Newton— Chrishall, Essex.

Glenys is helping Matt Allen warden the stretch of path between Heydon and Linton. Thank you!

Ian Vince—Salisbury, Wiltshire

We hope you enjoy your membership. Do let us know if you have found new places to explore along the Icknield Way—or Great Chalk Way.

# Along the Iceni Way around West Norfolk

Having reached the end of the Icknield Way at Knettishall Heath (and admired the new information board!) and having enjoyed the wide open spaces of the Suffolk-Norfolk border, you might be interested in exploring more of the unique landscape of Breckland and then continuing on through the Fens and on to the Wash.

The Iceni Way starts at Knettishall Heath and follows our Icknield Way route back towards Euston, D-house and Barrows Corner. From here, it goes northwards following our Thetford alternative route into Thetford, runs alongside the Little Ouse river through the town and then along the eastern edge of Thetford Forest (along St Edmund Way/Hereward Way) and around the north side of Brandon, following the river all the way.

At Brandon, you leave the Brecks and enter a completely different landscape - the Fens - where you can feel miles from anywhere (and you probably are!) Still following the Little Ouse River, you keep going west towards Feltwell and Brandon Creek where the Little Ouse joins the Great Ouse. The Iceni Way turns north again along the Great Ouse and on to Downham Market and King's Lyn, by far the largest settlement on the route. Depending upon your personality, when you arrive here you will be either elated at reaching civilisation at long last or traumatised by the noise and traffic, after the miles you have covered through quiet forests, along peaceful rivers and generally silent fenland!

After your time in historic King's Lyn, you continue on northwards through west Norfolk including the very attractive parts of the Sandringham estate and on to Snettisham where you at last head west again towards the coast of the Wash. And here you pick up the coastal path and follow it all the way to seaside town of Hunstanton.



The spectacular chalk and red sandstone cliffs at Hunstanton  
(Photo: Explore West Norfolk)

There are various interpretations of this route (for example, one can be found at <https://hiker.app/trails/england/suffolk/iceni-way/stages>) but whichever you choose, it will be very different to the long and mostly straight Peddars Way! Covering about 85 miles (135Km), you will experience an astonishingly wide range of East Anglian landscapes, especially the huge wide skies loved by many.

The Iceni Way is just one of many routes in East Anglia that connect with the Icknield Way.

*Chris James*

## NATIONAL TRAIL STATUS - an update

Since our last AGM where I met Chris Hinchliff, MP for North East Hertfordshire, and discussed with him our National Trail aim, he has been giving us his time and support, so to him we extend our very grateful thanks.

During the past year, we have issued a briefing paper explaining why we think National Trail status for the Icknield Way is vital. The paper has been sent to all the MPs along the Icknield Way as well as to the House of Commons All - Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Outdoor Recreation and Access to Nature, to seek their support.

We are also finalising a covering letter to be sent with the briefing paper to the relevant government ministers to seek a meeting with them to seek their support for up-graded status. We have kept other relevant organisations and notable individuals in the loop and have also sought their advice and assistance in seeking a broad range of opinions.

We have had warm support from some MPs, particularly in the south-west section of the Icknield Way. Laura Kyrke-Smith from the Aylesbury constituency which includes Ivinghoe Beacon has agreed to meet with key organisations involved at the Beacon for a photo opportunity at the new Great Chalk Way Information Board.

Laura has also agreed to discuss with us our bid for National Trail status and the ultimate aim of having all of the Great Chalk Way as a National Trail.

I wish to place on record my sincere appreciation and thanks to all my colleagues on our Executive Committee for their help, in particular Tim Johnson and Laurence Rix. I also wish to thank the National Trust (in particular Josh Kyle), Central Bedfordshire Council (especially Howard Hughes) and Suffolk Wildlife Trust (see previous page) for all their help and support.

*Doug Landman*

# PATH MAINTENANCE AROUND TODDINGTON

As well as being the Icknield Way Association Chairperson and an Icknield Way warden, Tom Chevalier is a volunteer warden for Central Bedfordshire Council improving and maintaining paths in Toddington, some of which include the Icknield Way. Tom is ably assisted by his wife, Bridget, and occasionally others. *Tom writes:*

Being warden is a varied role and, as vegetation keeps growing, there is always something to do! This is probably best illustrated with pictures.

The bridleway running from Chalgrave Church down the hill (see Map 4 of the Walker's Guide) should be 4-5m wide along its 850m (half mile) length. Keeping the overgrowth cut back gives users a wider surface to walk/ride on and reduces the mud but, crucially, it also allows sun and wind to help dry out the surface.



**(Above): bridleway at Chalgrave before selective cutting back (Below): the same section drying out after clearance**



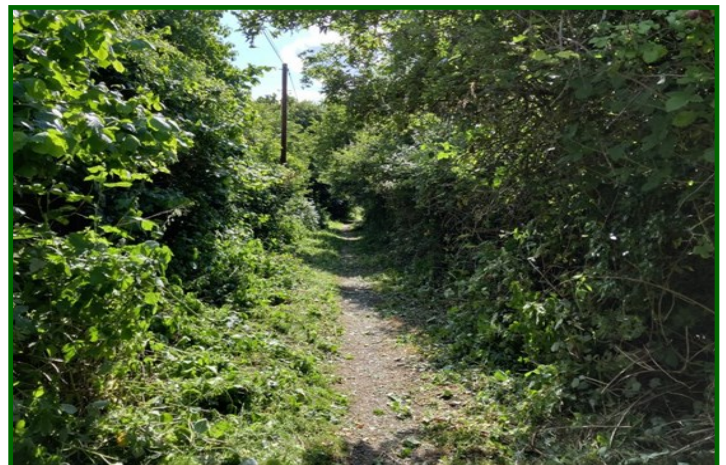
From Toddington to Mill farm, there is a fenced-in section of the Toddington alternative path (see Map 33 in the Walker's Guide) which regularly becomes overgrown. We have cleared the ground vegetation and overhanging branches several times recently and the farmer has helped by removing larger branches/trees with mechanical equipment that we are not qualified to operate.

Despite being on top of a hill, water is an ongoing issue. There are natural springs around Toddington making many paths wet for much of the year. So, it is an ongoing challenge to limit the mud. Last winter, on the section below Conger Hill, we tried removing the top layer of accumulated leaf mulch to get back to the gravel underneath, potentially the original track. Hopefully this will be less muddy. Like many things in life, you have to try, if that does not work then progress to another plan!



**Path below Conger Hill with free-flowing spring. Mulch has been scraped away to provide a gravelly surface**

In June we used the brush cutter to clear back brambles which were encroaching on a section of the Icknield Way at Sundon. It was nice to receive thanks from many local walkers while we were doing it.



**Clearance at Sundon removes brambles and lets the light in**

In conclusion, my goal has always been to keep the local network of paths clear for walkers. This is particularly important for a long distance route like the Icknield Way, where users are unlikely to know of any local blockages or know of viable local alternative routes. When I started this role my mentor at the time said: "the one thing that is certain – it will all grow again!"

# VOLUNTARY ROUTE WARDENS

Maps 1-3	Ivinghoe Beacon to A505	Colin Muskett	colinmuskett@yahoo.co.uk
Maps 4, 5(part)	A505 to Sundon Hills Country Park	Tom Chevalier	info@icknielldwaytrail.org.uk
Maps 5-6	Sundon Hills to Hexton-Lilley Road	Colin Muskett	colinmuskett@yahoo.co.uk
Map 7	Lilley Road to Pirton	Colin Muskett	colinmuskett@yahoo.co.uk
Map 8-9	Pirton to Wilbury Hill	Alex Goldie	kathy_alex.goldie@mac.com
Map 10	Wilbury Hill to Baldock	Laurence Rix	rix.laurence@googlemail.com
Maps 11-15	Baldock town centre to Heydon	Alec Gallagher	alecgallagher701@btinternet.com
Maps 16-19	Heydon to Linton	Matt Allen	mattyal@hotmail.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@icknielldwaytrail.org.uk
Maps 35-36	Thetford Link	Laurence Rix	rix.laurence@googlemail.com

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## BRECKS NEWS

In our Autumn 2019 Newsletter we included an article about an exciting initiative in Breckland. We are very pleased to now pass on more good news from The Brecks Fen Edge and Rivers Landscape Partnership.

Funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund has enabled the BFER team to deliver twenty-four projects over the last five years. Each of these projects had the landscape at its heart: enhancing, protecting and promoting the Brecks and encouraging local people and visitors alike to connect with nature and heritage. Now, with a further grant of nearly £250,000 from The Heritage Fund, they can carry on doing it!

The Brecks Landscape Resilience Project is an 18-month scheme which will develop a long-term model for the governance of the Brecks landscape and its heritage through a variety of activities including the development of a robust 10-year business plan. The project launches in November.



*With thanks to the Brecks project website  
for this information*