

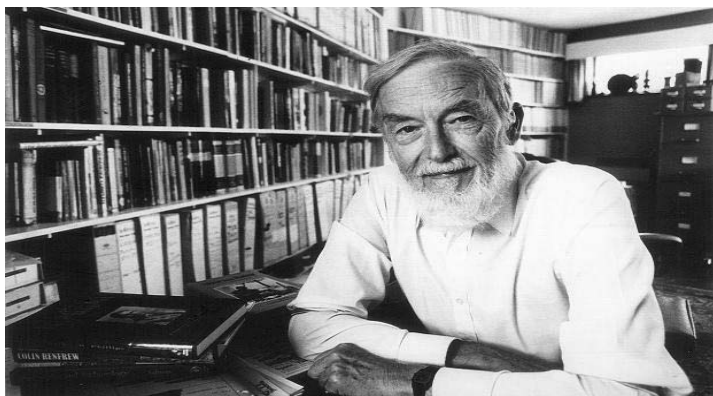


# NEWSLETTER

## SPRING 2013

### ICKNIELD WAY ASSOCIATION

#### PROFESSOR THURSTAN SHAW



Many Association members will know already of the death on Friday 8th March of our founder and guiding light, Professor Thurstan Shaw. His wife Pamela-Jane wrote to the Association: "Thurstan died in the most dignified and graceful manner literally in my arms". Professor Shaw was almost 99 years old and had been ill with pneumonia at Christmas.

On 18th November 1983, Thurstan invited several key members of regional walking groups to a meeting at his house in Stapleford, near Cambridge, to establish a Steering Group to launch the Icknield Way Long Distance Path. This photograph is probably how many of us remember Thurstan in his study in those early days. He was a man of great energy, dedication and enthusiasm for what he had already called the 'Great Chalk Way' stretching from the Dorset coast to the Wash. It is certain that, without Thurstan's vision, the Icknield Way Path would not have taken shape across its six counties. At the inaugural meeting of the Association in 1984, Thurstan remarked that the Steering Committee was the best he had ever worked with! He remained its chairman until 1989, 'retiring' to become the Association's President, a position he held until he regretfully stood down in 2001. It is to the Association's on-going regret that 'our' beautiful section of the Great Chalk Way has not yet been accepted for full National Trail status but we continue to live in hope that this will change one day.

The Association's committee acknowledges with enormous respect and affection the crucial role that Thurstan played and sends its warmest condolences to Pamela-Jane and other members of Thurstan's family.

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#### AGM LINK-UP WITH THE EDWARD THOMAS FELLOWSHIP

An event of which we are sure Thurstan would have heartily approved is set to take place over the weekend of **28-29 September**. Committee members John & Gil Boardman have followed up initial discussion with Richard Emeny and Colin Thornton of the Edward Thomas Fellowship (ETF) and agreed an outline for a celebration weekend. Final details will be publicised in our autumn newsletter but this is how the weekend is shaping up so far:

**SATURDAY MORNING:** A circular walk in the Telegraph Hill area led by IWA with friends from ETF and Friends of the Ridgeway (FOTR) followed by lunch at a nearby pub.

**SATURDAY AFTERNOON:** Social time at a local hall with a keynote speaker, exhibitions, books, tea, discussions and the IWA AGM.

**SATURDAY EVENING:** Celebration dinner

**SUNDAY:** Another morning walk along the Icknield Way with pauses for readings from Edward Thomas together with ETF & FOTR.

The location at the west end of the Way will be awkward for some IWA members but is chosen so that Friends of the Ridgeway may join us. We are sure it will be a special and memorable weekend and hope that many of you will be able to take part for at least part of the time!

**DIARY DATE!**  
**AGM**  
**SATURDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER**

## AGM WALK 2012 — photo gallery

Our meeting was held in glorious weather on Saturday 13th October at Burrough Green near Newmarket. Starting at the Reading Room, Phil & Sue Prigg led members north via Dullingham Ley to Stetchworth and the Devil's Ditch before retracing our steps on parallel paths to the east, completing a long thin circular of about 5.5 miles.

Thank you, Phil, for showing us some beautiful Icknield Way country on the Cambridge/Suffolk border.



Near Marmer's Wood, heading towards Stetchworth



The beautifully maintained track east of Stetchworth leading to Lower Ley Farm



Burrough Green



Remember this over-engineered stile at Muddy Lane ?



Coffee break at the Devil's Ditch, NE of Stetchworth

# AGM REPORT 2012

The 2012 AGM was attended by 17 members. It was very good to be joined by several who had not been seen for a couple of years. New chairman, Tom Chevalier and new secretary, Lesley Blundell steered the proceedings admirably and it was clear to all that the IWA had enjoyed a productive year, most especially with the publishing of the new 6th edition of the walkers' guidebook. Warm thanks were given to Sue Prigg for all her hard work on producing the new edition and for organising the attractive cover.

Considerable strides have also been made with improvements to way-marking. Fresh supplies of way-mark discs have been purchased and renewed contact with riding and cycling groups made. Potentially good news has been received about the pending dedication of the path leading across the field corner to Icknield Way, east of Wilbury Hill, Letchworth.

The Chairman had submitted a response to the government consultation on National Trails (more on this later in the newsletter) and the IWA has adopted a policy on wind-farms which states that it reserves the right to comment individually on any application deemed to have a damaging impact on the Icknield Way Path.

The Chairman reported that he had assisted the Chilterns Conservation Board to republish their leaflet called the Icknield Way – Ridgeway Link, which promotes the path between Ivinghoe Beacon and Dunstable. Central Bedfordshire Council paid for an update of the attractive trail leaflet produced several years ago and this is now available as a download at [www.icknieldwaytrail.org.uk](http://www.icknieldwaytrail.org.uk). This useful site provides information about the Icknield Way to cyclists and

horse-riders wishing to follow the route. A significant number of enquiries are received each year from cyclists. Sadly, the riders route guide book is now out of print so this website is the best that the IWA can offer them at the moment. A number of new wardens have volunteered to help keep an eye on the Way - the chairman suggested that a network of similar wardens on horseback and bicycle for the Trail might be something for the IWA to work towards in future.

After the considerable changes in committee agreed at the AGM in 2011, it was a relief that nobody stood down in 2012! So the elections were as follows:

Chairman	Tom Chevalier
Secretary	Lesley Blundell
Treasurer	John Boardman
Accounts Examiner	David Allard
Website & Membership	Sue Prigg
Newsletter Editor	Chris James
Member	Gil Boardman
Member	Phil Prigg

Sue Prigg told the meeting that the Association currently has 86 paying members. This figure is down on previous years but represents the real membership without the significant number of other (non-subscribing) supporters included on previous lists. Several other matters were discussed under any other business including how the IWA can increase its membership to include those from historical, archaeological and heritage organisations as well as more parish councils along the route. Suggestions were offered about how the IWA could do this. Other matters appear elsewhere in the newsletter!

## IWA ACCOUNTS

At the AGM, John Boardman reported that, historically, the IWA had needed to accumulate funds in order to promote the Icknield Way and, periodically, to pay for new editions of the Walkers Guide. Printing methods are now much more flexible, meaning that it is no longer necessary to pay for large stocks of guide books up front. This now allows the IWA to be more flexible in how it manages its funds. One-off expenses during the year had included a £500 donation to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust to secure the future of Knettishall Heath; replenishment of stocks of IWA way-mark discs; the production of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Guidebook, including licences from Ordnance Survey and for the front-cover Spencer Gore illustration. Overall during the year, expenditure exceeded income by £557.72, of which £500 had been the donation to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. The Association had therefore, more-or-less, broken even. The balance in the accounts at 31st August was a healthy £4,870.77.

John explained that the date for the financial year-end had been fixed as 31<sup>st</sup> August which will, for the first time, allow year-on-year comparisons. David Allard was thanked for being independent examiner. Chris James proposed the formal adoption of the accounts, seconded by Lesley Blundell, and this was carried unanimously. The Chairman thanked John for his clear and succinct presentation of the accounts.

## LONG SERVICE GIFTS!

Three long-serving committee members were 'mentioned in dispatches' at the AGM. Sadly, two of them were not able to attend the meeting to receive their gifts but Chris James, former Acting Chairman, presented David Allard with a glass tankard beautifully engraved with the IWA logo. David has examined the IWA accounts for many years and will continue to do so. In partnership with David Northrop, our former treasurer, the two of them kept our financial house in order but allowed us to spend money when we needed to on such important items as successive editions of guidebooks. David Northrop became involved in the early days of the IWA through the Long Distance Walkers Association and was delighted to receive a similarly engraved tankard, along with Peter Baker, the newsletter editor until 2011. When Chris took Peter's tankard to him at his home in Royston, he was too surprised to speak and it was only later that he was able to find the words to express his pleasure at receiving something so unexpected! The IWA is delighted to acknowledge the commitment of these three long-term supporters.



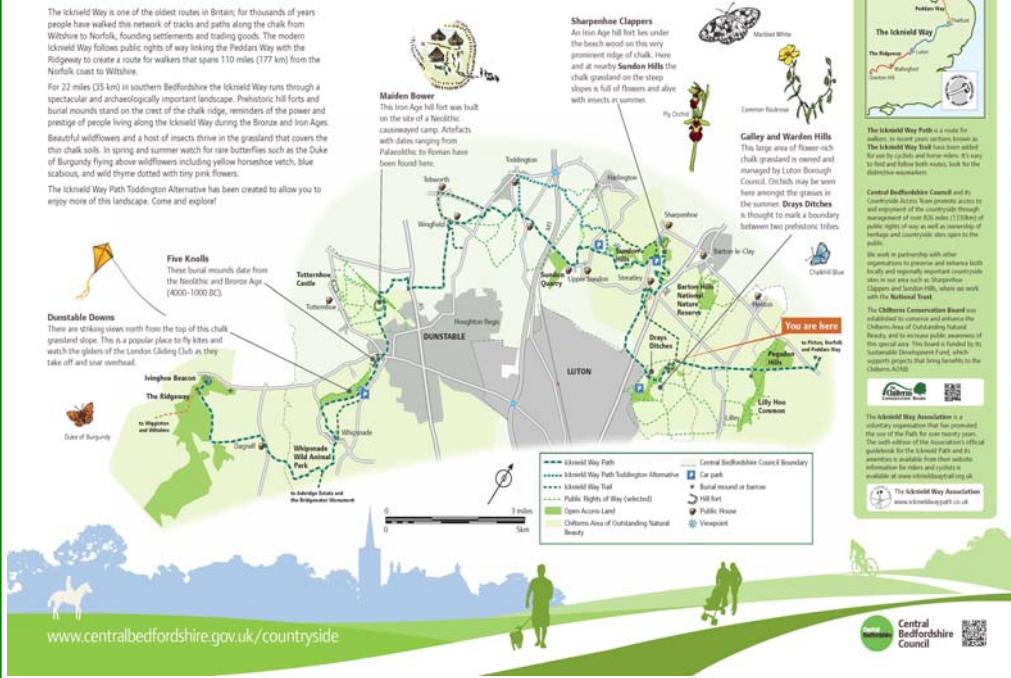
# NEW INFORMATION BOARD FOR GALLEY HILL

## Welcome to **The Icknield Way**

The Icknield Way is one of the oldest routes in Britain; for thousands of years people have walked this network of tracks and paths along the chalk from Wilshire to Norfolk, founding settlements and trading goods. The modern Icknield Way follows public rights of way linking the Peddars Way with the Ridgeway to create a route for walkers that spans 110 miles (177 km) from the Norfolk coast to Wilshire.

For 22 miles (35 km) in southern Bedfordshire the Icknield Way runs through a spectacular and archaeologically important landscape. Prehistoric hill forts and burial mounds stand on the crest of the chalk ridge, reminders of the power and prestige of people living along the Icknield Way during the Bronze and Iron Ages. Beautiful wildflowers and a host of insects thrive in the grassland that covers the thin chalk soils. In spring and summer watch for rare butterflies such as the Duke of Burgundy flying above wildflowers including yellow horsehoof, blue scabious, and wild thyme dotted with tiny pink flowers.

The Icknield Way Path Toddington Alternative has been created to allow you to enjoy more of this landscape. Come and explore!



The IWA is delighted to know that our long-time supporter, Michelle Flynn, at Central Bedfordshire Council has been able to obtain grant funding to pay for a new interpretation board to replace an elderly and faded version erected near Maulden Firs plantation many years ago.

This is very welcome news and the IWA is most appreciative of this recent demonstration of interest by CBC. It is hoped that Hertfordshire County Council might consider the replacement of another elderly board at Royston some time during the forthcoming year.

However, where the Way really needs some information and promotion is at the far eastern end of the Icknield Way Path at Knettishall Heath! Can any organisation help us here?

## GLEAM

GLEAM, the Green Lanes Environmental Action Movement, was founded in 1995 to campaign for changes in the law to stop off-road drivers destroying green lanes. It aims to protect both the environment and the rights of walkers, riders, pedal cyclists, carriage drivers and disabled people to use green lanes without danger, difficulty or inconvenience, while its wider objectives include the management of existing rights of way.

GLEAM's membership includes a large number of individuals, many Parish Councils and conservation organisations throughout England and Wales. Having supported GLEAM for many years, the Icknield Way Association became life members in 2009.

A GLEAM newsletter is published twice a year and campaign guidance papers are produced for members. Of particular interest and value is an 'In Practice' paper on Section 6 of the NERC Act 2006 which concerns the creation, extension and extinguishment of routes for 'mechanically propelled vehicles'. This is made available on the GLEAM website, as are its other guidance papers. GLEAM can also introduce its members trying to fight threats to specific green lanes to specialist professional advisers.

In 2005 GLEAM founded the Green Lanes Protection Group, an alliance of 21 organisations with the specific objective of improving the NERC Bill and now working for its proper implementation.

Any IWA members interested in finding out more about GLEAM, whose aims are in sympathy with our own, can find full details on their excellent website <http://www.gleam-uk.org>



A graphic illustration of the damage to our green lane heritage that GLEAM campaigns against.  
Photo: GLEAM

## MODIFICATION ORDER ON ICKNIELD WAY AT PIRTON

In November 2012, the Planning Inspectorate held a public enquiry into Hertfordshire County Council (Offley 54 and Pirton 28) Modification Order 2011 recording the Icknield Way between Westmill Lane at Ickleford and the Hexton Road as a bridleway.

The Planning Inspectorate released its decision in January 2013 and most alarmingly, the inspector has decided that the evidence shows that the Icknield Way is not a bridleway but a byway open to all traffic. The order has therefore been amended and a copy of the amended order was sent to the IWA, as well as to many other interested parties.

The IWA was advised that the decision was an interim decision which had to be advertised in order to allow injured parties to object. Objections, based only on whether the Inspector had incorrectly assessed evidence or failed to consider other evidence relevant to the case had to be submitted by 28th February 2013.

The walkers route does not follow this historic section of the Icknield Way, using instead the alternative and parallel Wood Lane and Hambridge Way tracks leading into and out of the attractive village of Pirton, thus allowing walkers access to useful village facilities such as shop and pub. Consequently, the IWA has not been able to lodge a legitimate objection. Our Secretary has however written to Herts Rights of Way department supporting a modification to bridleway but against a modification to BOAT.

Needless to say, there have been a large number of local objections to the modification to BOAT. One local resident stated: *"This stretch of the Icknield Way is part of the historic route and has probably been used only by horse and foot traffic (other than agricultural vehicles) since before 1818, the time of enclosure in Pirton parish, for instance. It is an historic unmetalled bridleway - a green lane - very popular locally with walkers and horse riders. The stretch running east towards Ickleford from Punch's Cross is a deep hollow-way on the hillside and a local attraction. Motor traffic would wreck its appearance and its fauna and flora, and spoil the enjoyment of existing and future users. To now allow motor traffic with all the attendant damage it will cause seems an act of vandalism."*

*HOT PRESS! We have just heard that The Planning Inspectorate is proposing to hold a public local inquiry within the next 8 months.*

### TONY NORTHWOOD

Not long after our AGM, we heard the sad news of the death of Tony Northwood. Tony was a keen supporter and a member of our committee representing the interests of the 'west end' for several years. He was an amazing source of local knowledge, and our meetings would very often get de-railed in the nicest possible way as a result of another of Tony's tidbits! Tony encouraged us to use the attractive Sundon Hills and Sharpenhoe sections of the route of the path, for which we thank him. We send our condolences to Brenda, his wife.



Tony (left) near Sharpenhoe 2007

## FANCY A WALK?

### SUNDAY May 12th 10AM

Linton to Great Chesterford 10.5 mile circular. Meet at Linton Health Centre in Coles Lane TL562468



Richard & Eileen  
01284 755744  
(Newmarket RA Gp)

### WEDNESDAY MAY 15TH 10AM

Sharpenhoe Clappers 6 miles  
Meet at the Clappers car park  
TL065296



Francis  
01234 852957 or  
07503 522259  
(Ivel Valley Walkers)

### SATURDAY JUNE 1ST 10AM

Therfield all day 12 mile figure-of-eight.  
Meet on village green opposite Fox & Duck PH TL 336372



Sarah  
01992 302914  
(East Herts Ramblers)

### WEDNESDAY JUNE 26TH 7PM

Ramparts Field evening walk 5 miles  
Meet at CP off A1101 West Stow.  
TL788715

[info@newmarketramblers.org.uk](mailto:info@newmarketramblers.org.uk)

### WEDNESDAY JULY 10TH 10AM

Dunstable Downs 7 mile circular  
Meet at Dunstable Downs Gateway Centre



Carol  
01582 882628  
(Ivel Valley Walkers)

### SUNDAY AUGUST 25TH 10AM

Hexton 13 mile circular  
Meet near the Raven PH, Hexton  
TL 106 307



Mike Connolly  
01462 491032 / 07815  
939549

# IS IT TIME AGAIN TO IMPROVE OUR STATUS?

## Background

The Icknield Way does not, yet, carry the status of a National Trail, although the route links two existing and long-established National Trails, the Ridgeway and the Peddars Way. The three connecting routes together are widely known as the Greater Icknield Way, or as our founder Professor Shaw called them 'the Great Chalk Way'. The Icknield Way Association constitution states:

*The aims of the Association shall be as follows, in so far as these aims are charitable in law:*

- a) To urge the official adoption of and completion of the Icknield Way as a National Trail linking the existing Ridgeway and Peddars Way National Trails*
- b) To promote and publicise the use of the Way and its amenities for the benefit of walkers*
- c) To promote a body of informed opinion that will improve the enjoyment and knowledge of the Icknield Way*

In recent years the limited resources of the Icknield Way Association have focused on the later two aims.

The Government consulted on the future of the National Trails during 2012 and the Icknield Way Association submitted one of the 141 responses received by Government. In March 2013 Government published the outcome of the consultation **The New Deal: Management of National Trails in England from April 2013 (NE426)**. This includes the statement: "...Natural England will continue to use our statutory powers as appropriate to propose new trails and amend existing ones ...". So there is still hope for the Icknield Way although in these financially challenged times the government will be reluctant to incur additional costs! Nevertheless, the government consultation covered two main aspects, one of which is the funding of the National Trails.

## Funding

The consultation highlighted that the funding arrangements of the existing National Trails have been extremely variable and seem to have no logical justification. So, during 2012, a working group developed a transparent funding formula which is fair to all the National Trails reflecting some of the key features which influence cost. Funding of each National Trail has been partly by local highway authority and partly by Natural England on a 1:3 ratio. It is intended that this will continue. Central government funding will continue at the same level of £1.67million for the next three years. Using the same formula and making some assumptions, such as including a riding route along the whole of the Icknield Way (with surely far lower costs than those for the Pennine Way bridleway!) along with guesses for protection of SSSIs and historic monuments, it is possible to estimate the funding that might be available to the Icknield Way. My estimate suggests a need for Natural England funding of £56k per annum, with an additional local authority highway contribution of £19k/year.

## Next Steps

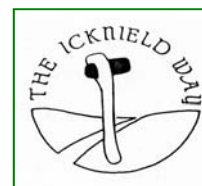
I propose that we should seek to achieve the first aim of the IWA Constitution of achieving National Trail status. To do so we will need to convince certain stakeholders, Natural England, the six highway authorities along the route and the existing National Trails at each end of our excellent case.

Actions:

- 1 Meet, explain and gain support from National Trails officers for Peddars Way and Ridgeway
- 2 Meet, explain and gain support from Natural England National Trail staff. Understand the process involved in gaining National Trail status, what evidence is required, etc.
- 3 Meet, explain and gain support from the six local highway authorities along the route
- 4 Address any perceived weaknesses, gain evidence to demonstrate case
- 5 Submit evidence to Natural England

Our success in gaining National Trail status will be enhanced by ensuring that the Icknield Way is available to walkers and riders. The Icknield Way through Buckinghamshire, Central Bedfordshire (except prior to A5/M1 road scheme), Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk already has a good co-incident or parallel riding route.

Tom Chevalier  
Chairman, Icknield Way Association  
April 2013



## MARPA STATION TO STATION WALKS

Unlucky for some but certainly not for the IWA, the Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association has published No 13 in its Walks series. Titled 'Icknield Way Path—Dullingham to Kennett', the downloadable 3-way folded leaflet describes a 14-mile walk commencing at Dullingham station near Newmarket and visiting Stetchworth, Woodditton, Cheveley, Ashley, Moulton, Gazeley and Kentford before finishing at Kennett Station. The clear, hand-drawn map is simple and uncluttered (in common with others in this admirable series). Included on the leaflet in two places are illustrations of our way-mark disc, as well as reference to our website so, all-in-all, this publication gives us a jolly good plug!

With thanks to Roger Wolfe, long-term supporter and member of IWA. Marpa works to promote and protect services on the Ipswich to Cambridge/Peterborough rail route and the purpose of the leaflets is to promote the use of rural stations as countryside gateways. For more information go to [www.marpa.org.uk](http://www.marpa.org.uk)

## BOOK REVIEW

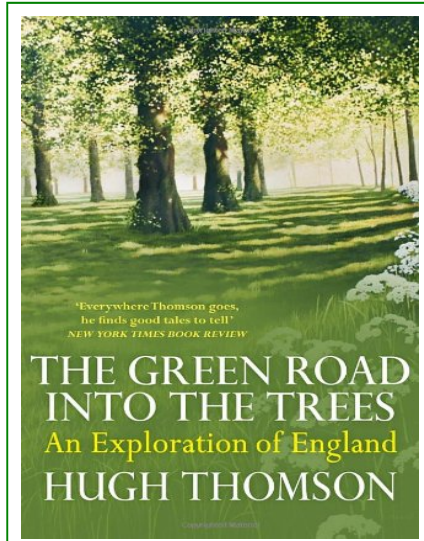
### **The Green Road into the Trees - An Exploration of England by Hugh Thomson:**

Preface Publishing 2012, hardback, 310pp, £18.99

What a strange coincidence that two books including significant passages about the Icknield Way were published in the same year (but not such a coincidence that I received both of them as presents at Christmas!)

I really enjoyed reading this book, as I did Robert MacFarlane's 'The Old Ways', but for different reasons. Obligated to relinquish the use of his car for 6 months, Hugh Thomson chooses to follow on foot the Great Chalk Way from the Dorset coast to the Wash. He takes his time, meeting fascinating characters on the way—some known to him and others quite unknown and taking the kind of paths that members of the IWA will know and appreciate. There are many and varied references to meeting people in other places as well as reflections on well-known poets and authors of prose (he recalls Coleridge and Wordsworth as he sits in the lee of a lone tree on the sheltered side of Ivinghoe Beacon). Most intrigued to discover how Hugh Thomson would deal with 'my' Hertfordshire Icknield Way I was not surprised to read quite a long passage about Wallington and George Orwell. More surprising though was that he met farmers I have known, spending time with them hearing about 'zero tillage' and the loneliness of the rural workforce today. It was also a relief to find that Thomson had found out about the deep historical divide in Hertfordshire between the ancient Celtic western half and the east which came under the influence of the Danelaw.

Somewhat disappointingly though, his chosen route takes him away from ours,



westwards into Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. As a result, we do not discover Hugh Thomson's impressions of the Brecks which would surely have been well worth reading.

Although very descriptive and almost elegiac in places, Thomson is not afraid of being refreshingly outspoken about many aspects of modern day life. This book does not pull any punches about the damage that has been done to our countryside in the race for wealth, status, progress all though the ages but it also joyfully celebrates our land which when looked at objectively is as exotic as some of the other places that Thomson has travelled in his work as film and documentary maker. I am glad to say that Hugh Thomson obviously enjoyed his exploration of the Icknield Way and appreciated our 'excellent' guidebook.

Chris James

## SNIPPETS

### ON YOUR MARKS

The Icknield Way Trail for horses and cyclists has now been comprehensively way-marked through the borough of **Dacorum**.

Tom Chevalier (our valiant chairman!) has taken photos of all the metal flag signs in **Hertfordshire** thus highlighting all those either past their sell-by date or wrongly positioned. The information has been passed to Herts Countryside Management Service who have promised to do what they can to replace the worn-out fingers.

Mike Gee, new warden for the **Thetford Link**, has offered to sort out all the way-marking along this important and useful part of the Way.

### GUIDEBOOK SALES

Over 280 copies of the 6th edition of the walkers' guidebook have been sold since its launch in May last year. Books have been posted to Spain, Holland, the US and Canada. The latest request was from a walker in Sark, Channel Isles.

Sadly though, our very accommodating printer is selling the business in the near future and there is no guarantee that any new buyer will maintain the very competitive price! So your committee have agreed to print a further 500 copies to hold in stock.

Don't forget, the guidebook is available via the website [www.icknieldwaypath.co.uk](http://www.icknieldwaypath.co.uk)

### LUISETTA'S FILM

Those of you who attended our AGM in October will remember the delightful film shown by Luissetta Mudie. Produced by Luissetta for her Masters Degree in Documentary, the short film will shortly be available via Amazon.

### WILBURY HILL—NEW LINK

An application for a bridleway dedication along a well used field margin track next to the historic Roman camp and cutting off the corner linking Wilbury Hill picnic area with the residential road Icknield Way at Letchworth looks set to go ahead later this year. Look out for confirmation on the website and in the next news.

## VOLUNTARY ROUTE WARDENS

Maps 1-3	Ivinghoe Beacon to A5	Helen Fletcher-Rogers	hfrogers@dial.pipex.com
Maps 4, 33-34	A5 to Sundon Hills Country Park	Tom Chevalier	tom@chevalier.me.uk
Maps 5,6	Sundon Hills to Hexton-Lilley Rd	Carol Bond	carol.bond@hotmail.com
Map 7	Lilley Road to Pirton	Lesley Blundell	lesleyblundell@btinternet.com
Map 8-9	Pirton to Wilbury Hill	Alex Goldie	kathy_alex.goldie@mac.com
Map 10	Wilbury Hill to Baldock	Chris James	chrisjames56@btinternet.com
Maps 11-15	Baldock town centre to Heydon	David Allard	david.allard@ntlworld.com
Maps 16-19	Heydon to Linton	James Quantrill	01279 653899
Maps 20-21	Linton to Willingham Green	Roger & Janet Moreton	roger.janet@care4free.net
Maps 22-27	Willingham Green to Icklingham	Phil Prigg	phil@prigg.co.uk
Maps 28-29	Icklingham to D-house	Tom & Gill Caple	gill.caple@btinternet.com
Maps 30-32	D-house to Knettishall Heath	Edward Wortley	ewortley@tiscali.co.uk
Maps 35-36	Thetford Link	Mike Gee	ramblergees@hotmail.co.uk

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