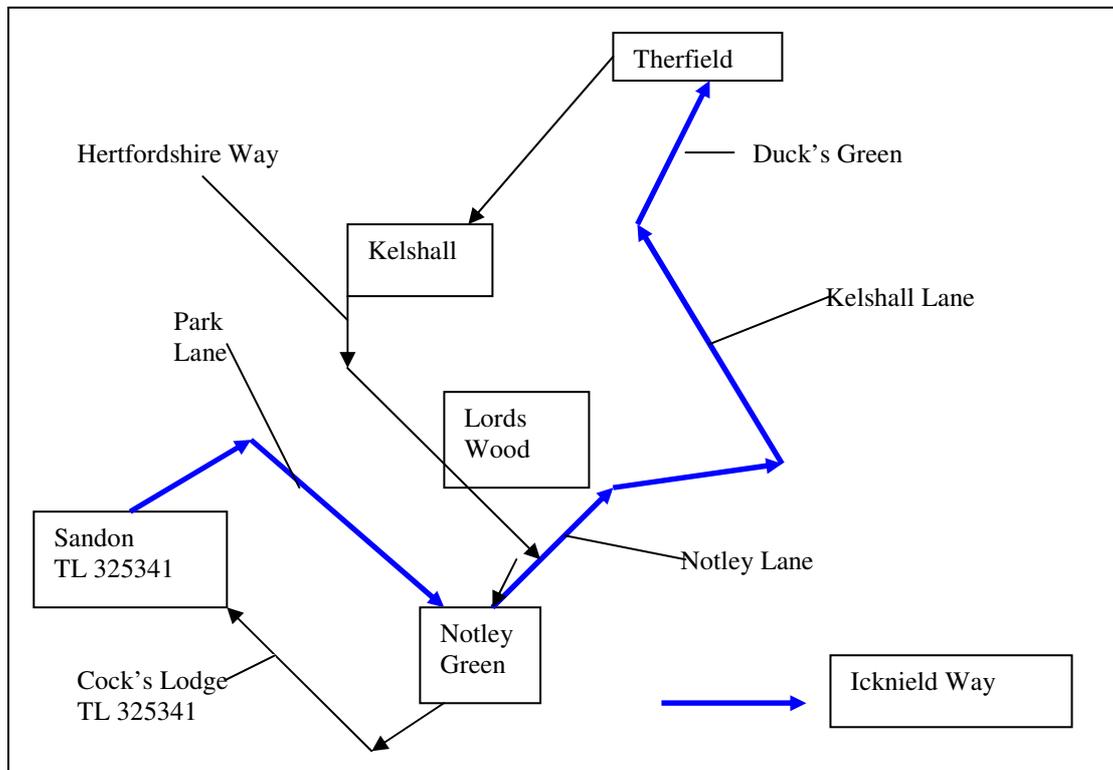


## The Icknield Way. Part 10 from Sandon to Therfield. 9 May 2010

Map OS Explorer 194. An easy wander through history, this section starts in Sandon and meanders generally NE along green lanes to Therfield – following, of course, the route of the Way. The return circles back to the W of the outward leg, rejoins it at Notley Green and heads back to Sandon past Cock's Lodge (TL 325341). 11-12 km.



This section seems to be a time capsule taking one back to, perhaps, less hectic times when cattle had to be transported by foot and villages were connected by pastoral byways. Ghosts of many trysts inhabit the hedges of the lanes.

The Way passes Sandon church, at this time of year the yard is confetti-strewn with cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) – one of the first umbels to flower in the spring.



The track leads onto Park Lane, the first of several well-maintained, tree-lined lanes that the Way follows to reach Therfield. Park Lane leads to Notley Green and then Chain Walk. Bluebells are in the woods still, although their days must be numbered as the trees (mostly oak and ash) start to sprout their foliage and so, eventually, shade them out. The two tree species seem to be doing it at about the same time, so are we in for a wet summer?

*Oak before ash, in for a splash  
Ash before oak, in for a soak*

The hedgerows are still busy with foraging bumble bees visiting the, now almost wall-to-wall early flowers: cow parsley in the verges vies with stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*) to receive the insects' essential visits. And early grasses, such as meadow

foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) have already hung out their anthers to the wind – they have evolved to eschew the vagaries and uncertainties of reliance on insects. The oilseed rape crop is now in flower and is another attractant for bees – most of the honey produced in the UK reputedly comes from this source.



**White bluebell**

**Cow parsley**

**Stitchwort**

**Meadow foxtail**

**Oilseed rape**

Oil seed rape (also called ‘canola’ after the trade name for the refined oil) is a brassica (*Brassica napus*) and takes its name from the Latin *rapum* for turnip. We will need to get used to seeing more of it in the future as the demand for biodiesel grows and displaces food crop production.

The Way passes Hawkins Wood, now a woodland reserve but at one time managed for timber and charcoal production by coppicing as indicated by the lines of the medieval banks that still divide it today. It is also home to a herd of fallow deer, displeased, but not too alarmed, at our violation of their space. A Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum* – not much danger of forgetting *that* name) perched epiphytically on an ash bole, gives a flash of pink in contrast to the whites, greens and yellows of its surroundings.



**Wood bank**

**Arum lily**

**Herb Robert**

**Horse chestnut**

The Arum lilies (*Arum maculatum*) are finally rearing their heads. The plant has a number of local names which attempt to describe its curious form. Richard Mabey<sup>1</sup> mentions: Cuckoo-pint; Cuckoo flower; Jack in the pulpit; Parson in the pulpit; Devil’s and angels; Red-hot poker; Willy lily; Snake’s meat; Cows and bulls. Whereas Lords-and-Ladies is reputed to be Victorian downstairs vulgarity and is a version of ‘the Lord’s and the lady’s’.

Chain walk merges with Kelshall Lane and Duck’s Green before veering off to reach Therfield. The village green is a fine place to stop and contemplate, but unfortunately the Fox & Duck has a sign on the door entreating walkers to remove their boots before entering. Not a task to be lightly undertaken by creaking joints and weary muscles. So the thirst quenching will be left until the next leg of the Way walk.

<sup>1</sup> Flora Britannica, 1998. p21

From the green, the return circular route takes us out past the church and on SW to North End and Kelshall where there are remains of a medieval cross or two (one at a crossroads and the second in the churchyard).



The horse chestnut trees are now in flower with their spectacular candle-blooms standing proud above the fresh green of the newly emerging foliage. The route follows the Hertfordshire Way past Lords Wood and Philpott's Wood and returns to Notley Green and so back to Sandon taking a diversion past Cock's Lodge and its adjacent wood and back across the fields to the starting

point.