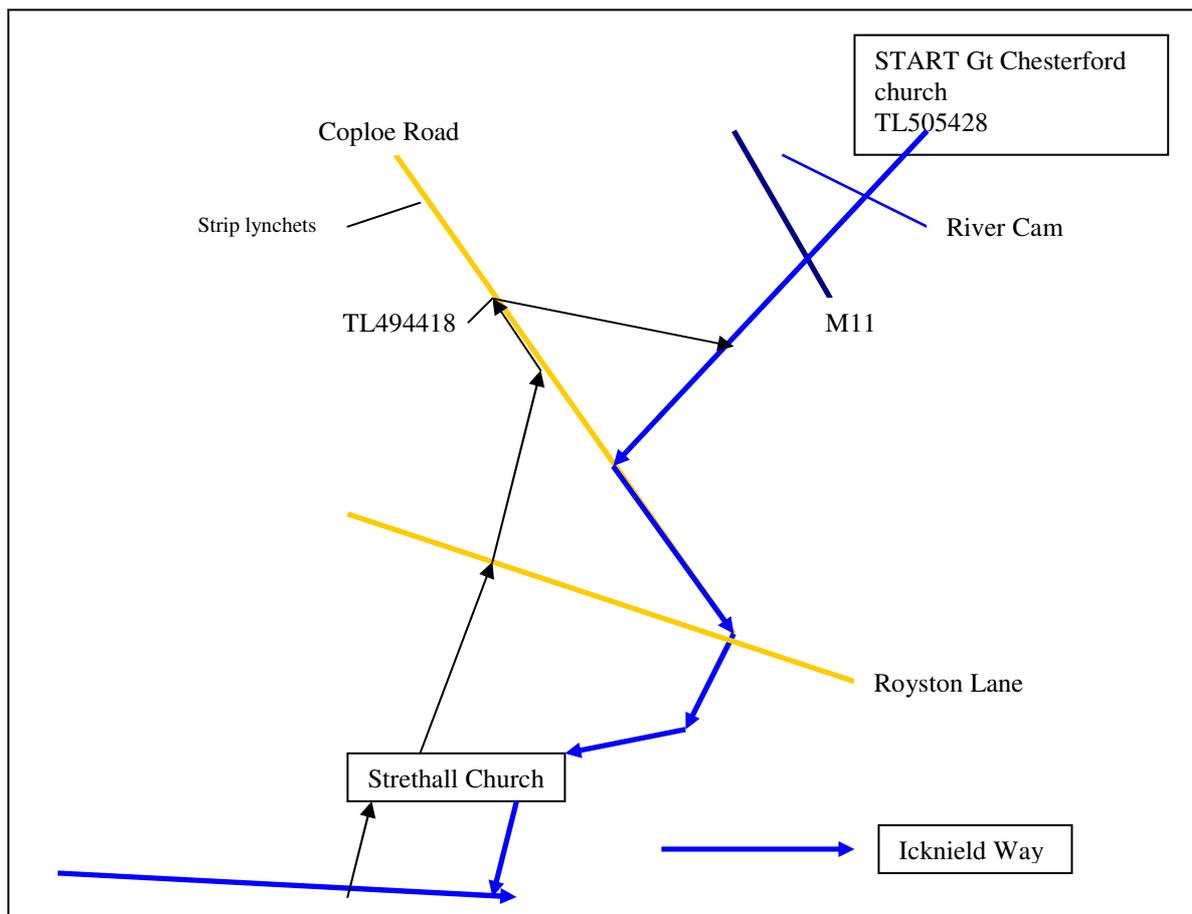


## The Icknield Way. Part 14 from Great Chesterford to Strethall. 11 July 2010

*Maps OS Explorer 194 & 209. This section, as the observant will already have spotted, was walked in reverse. This was solely a logistical manoeuvre as it seemed easier to park in Great Chesterford than to take the risk that no such space would be available at Strethall Church. In the event the concern proved to be unfounded. However, that comes later. This walk follows the Way S and E from Great Chesterford, crossing the M11 and arriving at Strethall Church. A small diversion is added on to reach to the place where section 13 left the Way. The route then returns parallel to the outward leg and joins it before the M11 to return to the starting point. 10 km*

Great Chesterford was an important Roman garrison town although today there is little sign of this former status. From the church, the Way follows the road to cross the River Cam (or Granta) and then forks towards Ickleton, crossing the railway line and turning first SE and then SW to span the busy M11. This is rolling prairie country, although the path at first follows an ancient hollow way between lines of trees giving welcome shade.



The Way joins Coploe Road for a few hundred metres before branching SW towards Strethall Church, immediately to the E of Strethall Hall Farm. It is a church that has survived over 1000 years of use. It has a fine Saxon chancel arch dating from 1010 and some excellent medieval heads decorating the external windows.



There is a conveniently placed bench seat under the haughty and/or shocked gaze of these two, a good place for lunch. There is also a large

expanse of potential parking space in front of the neighbouring farm.

To complete the Way, we continued on S from the church to our arrival point on Stage 13 (TL488395). This served to underline the sylvan isolation of the church and to wonder at the many feet that had trodden these same pathways for more than a millennium.

The return route is at first parallel to the Way, but to its W (TL486399). The footpath heads N to Royston Lane and then NE to Coploe Road (wheat prairies again). A path leads off E (at TL494418) to rejoin the Icknield Way and so to retrace our steps to Chesterford Church. A subsequent visit to the strip lynchets to the W of Coploe Road just S of Ickleton was a bit disappointing as they are no longer used for crop production and have become overgrown with scrub. But the chalk pit yielded chalkland flowers, wild parsnip and a fully grown broomrape (see Section 12). Throughout the afternoon we were entertained by the air display at Duxford. Plenty of WW2 hardware to add the growl of Merlin engines to the sultry summer evening.



**Wheat prairie**



**Bellflower**



**Lady's bedstraw**



**Wild parsnip**