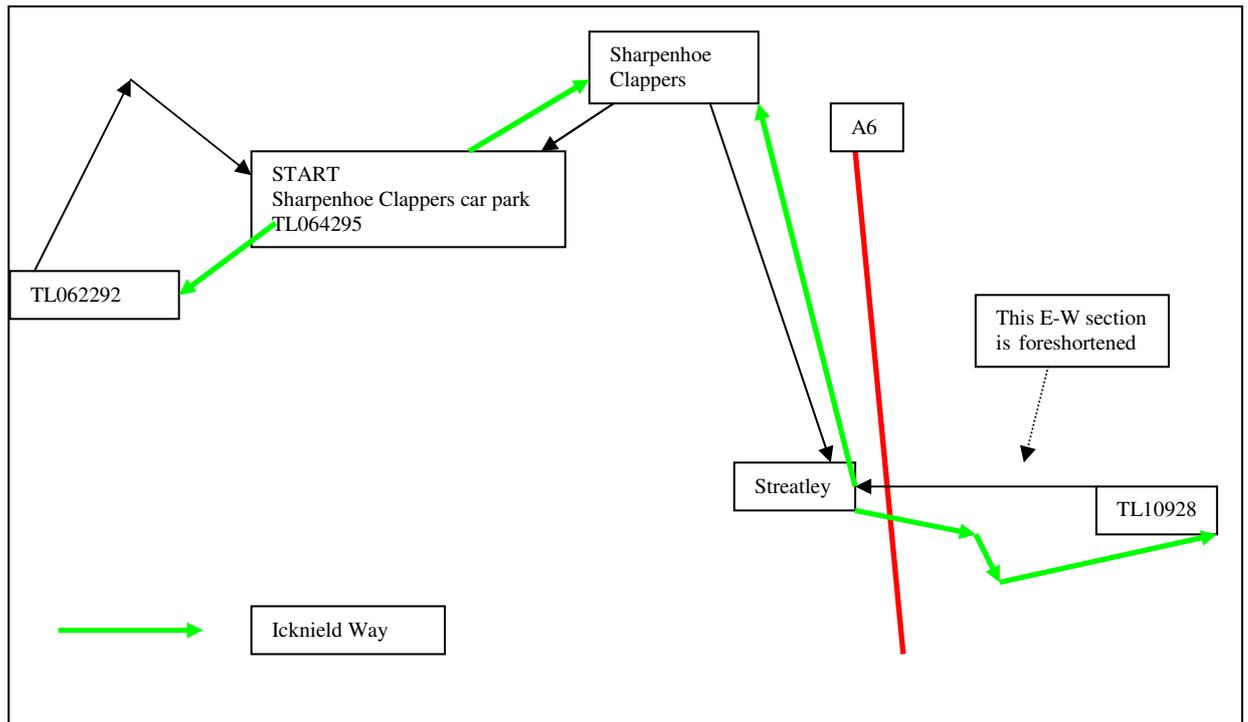


## The Icknield Way. Part 6 from Sharpenhoe Clappers NT park to the green lane (ex) car-park at TL 109283. 4 April 2010

The map is still the OS Explorer 193. This stroll makes a short backward detour to the Icknield Way (IW) finishing point on Section 5, then takes in Sharpenhoe Clappers before turning S to Streatley and then E to the end point of today's circular route (an ex-car park at TL109283). The route then returns to Streatley along a straight B road running practically due W. From Streatley the return route takes the IW back to the Clappers and the car park. 14-15 km.



Part 5 of the Way arrived at a steep climb in Sundon Country Park (TL062292). So, to complete the section, today there was a short backtrack from the Sharpenhoe Clappers NT car park (TL064295) back into Sundon Park, down the escarpment steps and returning over the Moleskin hills using a NT track (not shown on the OS map). The backtracking is well worth while as it allows time to explore this elegant NT reserve. The stroll through beech and ash woods hanging on the chalk escarpment revealed a fine example of a King Alfred's cake fungus (*Daldinia* spp.) sharing space with what could have been jelly bracket fungus (*Phlebia* spp.).



*Daldinia* spp.



*Phlebia* spp. ??



Ivy (*Hedera helix*)



Dog's Mercury

One especially glossy ivy, with more lanceolate leaves than usual, was bearing seeds from the flowers that had sustained many an insect through the winter. And the Dog's Mercury was making full use of the sunlight able to penetrate to ground level before the tree leaves shade it out. Back up through Moleskin, where the hawthorn brush is being carefully controlled to encourage more wild flowers, and a return to the Start Point.

From here the Way heads N towards Sharpenhoe Clappers whose mound is the remains of a mediaeval rabbit warren overlying an Iron Age fort on this magnificent vantage point.



**Sundon chalk escarpment**



**Scrub control at Moleskin**



**The warren at Sharpenhoe**

From the Clappers we passed through NT fields to the Chequers at Streatley as we were to return along the stretch of the Way that parallels the A6 at this point.

The fields were alive with the song of exuberant skylarks which seemed to ascend and descend from all points. Doubtless this display was a menace to some, but not to the passer-by.



**Streatley church**



**Mediaeval settlement site**



**Celandines**

From the Chequers (where the Abbot is excellent) through the churchyard where it appears that there may be Roman tiles in the brickwork of the tower and past what appears to be the site of an abandoned mediaeval settlement – and more delights of the arriving spring, this time celandines.

The Way leads on over the A6, passed Swedish Cottages and on towards Galley Hill. The Hill (worth a short detour) boasts a pair of barrows dating from the Iron Age. Many (quite gruesome) pieces of human remains have been found in the area and in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century it was the site of a gallows (hence the name). We move on along the Way, past Mortgrove farm (death seems to permeate this section) and so to the (now closed off) car park at TL109283). Plenty more signs of spring here with grey willow (♀) catkins and horse chestnut buds bursting forth.



**Grey willow (*S. cinerea*) ♀ Galley Hill barrow Sticky bud erupting Old Man's Beard**

After a road plod due W back to Streatley, the last stretch of the Way takes us N towards the Clappers again along a path bordered by last year's Old Man's Beard together with this year's clematis shoots. Delightful in the evening sunlight.