

Upper Thames Walk
Ashton Keynes to Cricklade
Saturday 29 June 2013

This walk will be led by David and Gillian Pick. (Please check the REMS web-site for any updates before setting out on this walk)

The walk of about 9 km starts at Ashton Keynes garage bus stop. Ashton Keynes is an attractive village constructed mainly in Cotswold stone. The actual route of the Thames in this area is not obvious since there are several gravel excavations and the well way-marked Thames Path follows a causeway between the resultant lakes. After about 5 km the Thames emerges from the lake complex by Hailstone Hill. The Thames path then follows a short section of the disused Cricklade to Cirencester Railway line before reaching the NorthWiltshire Canal aquaduct and the North Meadow National Nature Reserve. This meadow was one of the examples presented by David Gowing at the Jan 2013 at Home in his talk on vegetation patterns in meadows. We then arrive at Cricklade in time for lunch at the Red Lion on the High Street. Cricklade is the first township on the Thames and is well worth exploring before returning by bus to Swindon.

“Cricklade was founded in the 9th century by the Anglo Saxons, who chose it for the fact that it is where the Roman road Ermin Street crosses the River Thames. It was the home of a Saxon royal mint.[5] It is one of thirty burhs (fortresses or fortified towns) recorded in the Burghal Hidage document, which describes a system of fortresses and fortified towns built around Wessex by King Alfred. Recent research has suggested that these burhs were built in the short period 878-9 both to defend Wessex against the Vikings under Guthrum, and to act as an offensive to the Viking presence in Mercia. It is argued that the completion of this system, of which Cricklade – situated only a little way down Ermin Street from Cirencester, the Viking base for a year – was a key element, precipitated the retreat of the Vikings from Mercia and London to East Anglia, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in late 879. The square defences of the fortification were laid out on a regular module. They have been excavated in several places on all four of its sides by a number of archaeologists since the 1940s, and is possibly the most extensively sampled fortification of the period. In the initial phase, a walkway of laid stones marked the rear of a bank of stacked turves and clay, which had been derived from the three external ditches.” (from Wikipedia)

Starting from Swindon Rail Station walk down Wellington Street to Swindon bus station (~5min.) to catch the 52 bus leaving at 10.35 from stand 17 for Cirencester via Ashton Keynes. It arrives at the village garage in Ashton Keynes around 11.23. There is an hourly (hh.20) bus service 51 back to Swindon from Cricklade (bus shelter on Calcutt Street first main left down the High street).

I can be contacted on the day on my mobile phone number 00447733555113

