

Founded: 1957

Registered Charity No: 1068733



Bishop's Stortford & District

Footpaths Association



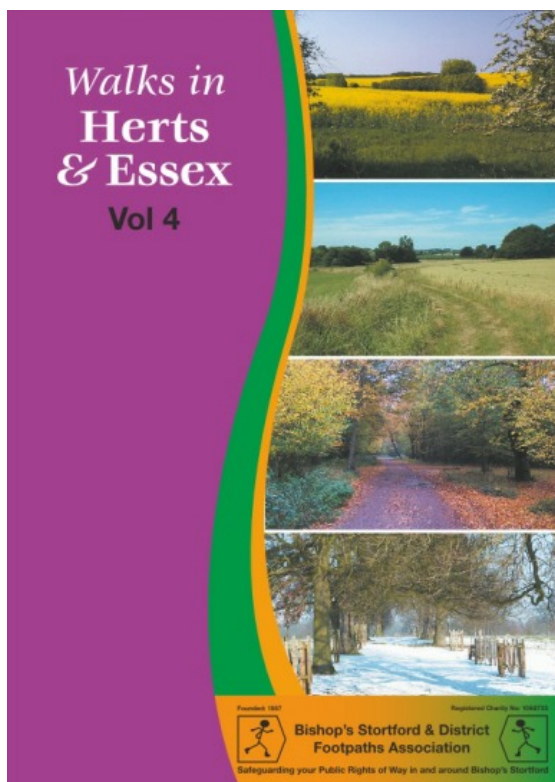
Safeguarding your Public Rights of Way in and around Bishop's Stortford



Newsletter

Autumn 2012

**Look out for our new walks booklet -
on sale Monday 5th November for £6.**



It is available from:

- the Bishop's Stortford Tourist Information Office
- Committee Members on our walks
- by post via the website

Chairman:	Dave Webber	e-mail: chairman@walksaroundstortford.org.uk
Vice Chairman:	Brian Hayes	e-mail: chairman@walksaroundstortford.org.uk
Secretary:	Ann Lowe	e-mail: secretary@walksaroundstortford.org.uk
Membership Secretary:	Maggy Rapley	e-mail: membership@walksaroundstortford.org.uk
Treasurer:	Bob Dean	e-mail: treasurer@walksaroundstortford.org.uk
Footpath Secretary:	Alan Goffee	e-mail: footpaths@walksaroundstortford.org.uk
Website Manager:	Brian Hayes	e-mail: website@walksaroundstortford.org.uk
Newsletter Editor:	Peter Hales	e-mail: newsletter@walksaroundstortford.org.uk

Association Address: 11 Bishop's Avenue, Bishop's Stortford, Herts, CM23 3EJ

Website: www.walksaroundstortford.org.uk

To contact any of the committee members, please e-mail: [**contact@walksaroundstortford.org.uk**](mailto:contact@walksaroundstortford.org.uk)

Note from the Chairman

The BSDFA has been protecting and promoting the rights of way around Bishop's Stortford for over 50 years. This has only been possible due to the dedication of a large number of special people who have given their time, energy and enthusiasm to the Association over the years. I was reminded of this as we prepared to launch our new walks booklet which should be available to purchase by the time this newsletter reaches you. Our booklet committee, comprising Joyce Chapman, Phil Tripp and Paul Elliott have spent over two years researching, planning and drafting the twentyone walks that make up the booklet. It has taken many hours of their personal time to get the booklet from the planning stage to the printers. I hope the booklet will fire up our existing members to get out into the local countryside and introduce newcomers to our district to the pleasures of walking the rights of way on our doorstep.

We were delighted that the Secretary of State refused permission for the Herts and Essex and Bishop's Stortford High Schools to relocate to Green Belt land at Thorley. This ensures that the section of the Hertfordshire Way that runs through the site will not be compromised. Indeed the Inspector noted this as a major factor in refusing permission as he stated that there would be "significant adverse impact on the character, appearance and enjoyment of this section of the HW in both recreational and visual terms". Our thanks go to our former chair, Sylvia McDonald and many others who campaigned tirelessly throughout the Inquiry to prevent this unnecessary development at the southern edge of our town.

Unfortunately the challenges keep coming with proposals to build over 2500 houses on 300 acres of countryside to the north of Bishop's Stortford. We will be taking a close look at any proposals with particular focus on the impact to the rights of way network that crosses the area. Already the local community has taken action with the launch of 'Save Our Stortford' – more details are available on their website (www.saveourstortford.org).

Finally, I will finish were I began by paying tribute to someone who dedicated a considerable amount of their time to the local community. Michael Hurford, a member of our Association for many years, passed away in September. Michael worked tirelessly for our town and as President of the Bishop's Stortford Civic Society guided them through several high profile campaigns including Stansted expansion and most recently successfully coordinating objections to the schools relocation to Thorley. He will be missed and we extend our condolences to his family.

Thank you for your continued support.

Dave Webber, Chairman
Bishop's Stortford & District Footpaths Association

Report on AGM, Wednesday 28th March 2012

The Chairman, Dave Webber, spoke of the highlights of the year - including the success of the organised walks, the revamped web site, the nearly completed new walks booklet (with 21 walks and retailing at £6). He also emphasised that the key part of our work is looking after the local footpath network but that issues can take a long time to resolve. Dave read out a report from Sylvia McDonald regarding the public enquiry into the schools relocation to green belt land in Thorley. Dave concluded by saying that he was optimistic about the future of the Association given that we now have several new committee members. Paul Elliot will be leaving the committee but will continue to help with the Association's work.

Treasurers Report – Christine Ross presented the statement of Receipts and Payments for 2011. The statement of finances was accepted by the meeting. A member asked why we hold three bank accounts. The Treasurer explained that the National Savings account was used for the bulk of our savings. The other two accounts were used for payments one of which is a savings account which is infrequently used due to the poor interest rate offered.

Secretary / Membership Secretary Report – Christine Ross. At the time of the AGM we had 242 members. Our membership list has been updated and only recently paid up members will receive our newsletter in future. It is possible that due to increased costs we will need to review our membership fees for next year. As Christine Ross is intending to move away from the area, she wanted to thank the Chairman and all the committee members for their help and support and she wished all the Association's members interesting walks on safe footpaths in beautiful countryside.

The following Officers and Committee Members were appointed

Chairman: Dave Webber

Vice Chairman: Brian Hayes

Treasurer: Christine Ross (will continue until she is able to hand over to a new Treasurer)

Secretary: Ann Lowe

Committee: Peter Hales, Linda Ketteridge, Frances Clapp, Joyce Chapman, Phil Tripp, Bob Dean, Maggy Rapley, Alan Goffee.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

After over 30 years as Independent Examiner, Mr. Dick Prime, is not seeking reappointment. The meeting expressed their appreciation of all he has done. Dave Webber asked if anyone knew of someone willing to take on this role.

Questions from members and discussion:

A member asked why with a healthy balance in our savings account we would need to increase our subscriptions in the future. Phil Tripp explained that our savings were for legal representation if we should need it to fight a footpath issue in the future.

Volunteering to maintain footpaths was discussed with an example of the Hallingbury area working with Essex CC. A new member gave the Committee a vote of thanks and another thanked the Committee for organizing an enjoyable walks programme.

There was a discussion about walk descriptions and Dave Webber agreed that in future the website would include more information about the terrain and number of stiles on the walk. This would help members decide whether the walk would be suitable for them.

There was a break for refreshments followed by an illustrated talk on the Uttlesford Way by Peter Cooper who has recently written a book of circular walks along the route.

Reminder:

Have you paid your subscription for this year?

If not, please fill in and post the form on page 5.

The Hundred Parishes

The Hundred Parishes conference was held in the Council Chamber at Uttlesford District Council's offices, Saffron Walden on Monday, 25th June 2012. Following the support given by delegates at the conference The Hundred Parishes Society board was elected and The Hundred Parishes Society was accordingly registered as a company limited by guarantee and given company number 8124462.

A strategic overview of The Hundred Parishes was presented to conference delegates and an open discussion of the proposed boundary for The Hundred Parishes followed. Due to the strength of feeling from the delegates modifications to the proposed boundary were subsequently made. The boundary definition was modified to include the whole of any parish within which The Hundred Parishes criteria are satisfied. Consideration was given by the board to the opinion expressed by some delegates that Bishop's Stortford should be included. The board recognised that Bishop's Stortford was important historically and has an interesting centre, however, due to the urban nature of most of the town today they felt that it did not sit easily with the characteristics of The Hundred Parishes as a whole and would give visitors a misleading impression of the rest of the area, especially as Bishop's Stortford with its railway station is potentially a significant gateway to the area. The board concluded that the town should not be within The Hundred Parishes. The board also considered appropriate to continue to exclude Stansted Airport, even though this would exclude parts of the parishes of Stansted Mountfitchet, Birchanger and Takeley. As part of the "whole parish" approach, it was felt that the whole of Thorley parish should now be included albeit that this included a modern residential area that appeared to merge into Bishop's Stortford. It was felt that the whole of Harlow Town should now be excluded, thereby removing Churchgate Street. The board will continue with consultations and make changes to the boundary as appropriate to ensure that it fairly defines the area that meets The Hundred Parishes criteria.

At the time of writing the board have still to officially launch The Hundred Parishes Society inviting individuals to become members. The board wish to achieve charitable status and establish a website intended for individuals (their current website is aimed at local authorities and organisations) before doing so. The funding required to build and marshall information from each of the 100 parishes (actually 107) is estimated at £8,000 and the board have so far been unsuccessful in obtaining a grant. In addition to this funds, or a promise of funds, totalling £5000 are required before the board can apply to the Charity Commission to be registered as a charity.

Should you require further details please contact Ken McDonald, Secretary to The Hundred Parishes Society:
2 Greenfields, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex CM24 8AH

National Trust Walking Festival

We were asked to take part in the NT Walking Festival by leading a walk from Hatfield Forest. The walk took place on Sunday 21st October. Nineteen people enjoyed a 5 and a half mile walk despite the wet and muddy conditions.



The walk started at the Visitor Centre. We headed south through the forest and then walked through Wall Wood to Woodside Green. We then joined the Harcamlow Way / Three Forests Way up to Beggar's Hall. From there, we re-entered the forest and headed up to the Flich Way before heading back to the Shell House via Street Coppice and the lake.

Walking and the Law

Many of the paths we use go back hundreds of years and their protection today has been built up over the last 170 years. "Rights Of Way: A Guide to Law and Practice" is the reference book used to cover these issues. It has 883 pages and is not recommend for bedtime reading! The acts and their main points are covered below.

The Rights of Way Act 1932 created, for the first time, a statutory framework which the creation of a right of way was presumed from evidence of use by members of the public. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 introduced the recording of all Rights Of Way on definitive maps. It also allowed for the cost of these be at public expense. The Highways Act 1959 and its 1980 replacement introduced procedure for enforcing a Highways Authority's duty to keep paths in good condition. The Countryside Act 1968 required paths to be signposted and waymarked and updated procedures for definitive maps. The Countryside and Rights Of Way Act 2000 brought into force rights of the public to seek removal of obstructions and to prosecute farmers who fail to reinstate crossfield paths. Highways Authority's were also required to draw up Rights Of Way improvement plans.

Paths fall into 3 main areas: Footpaths for the use of walkers; Bridleways for the use of walkers, horse riders and cyclists; and Byways - open to all traffic including motorised vehicles. In some areas landowners allow walkers to follow routes not shown on a map or officially signposted. These are called "Permissible Paths". They are not covered by any law and are maintained and shut as the landowner wishes.

All path access or condition problems found by members of the public should be reported to the relevant Highways Authority. They have a Rights of Way division responsible for this work. There is no laid down time scale for responding to problems but dangerous situations will always be given priority. In the event that no action is taken to have an obstruction across a path removed (allowing for reasonable time to respond or communicate the situation) a member of the public may serve a notice on the authority. This is known as a Section 130A and it requests the authority to take action to remove the obstruction. The case can be taken to magistrates court if there is no satisfactory outcome.

Landowners are responsible for keeping paths clear of overhanging growth in the same way a householder must keep hedges clear of a pavement. Farmers are allowed to plough crossfield paths provided the surface is made good in 24 hours or 2 weeks if this is the first time the crop has been disturbed. It is reasonable to expect that two weeks is adhered to. Farmers must also not allow a crop to obstruct a path. A crossfield path should be 1 metre wide and a field edge 1.5 metres. For Bridleways it should be 2 and 3 metres respectively. Farmers need to manage their crops and livestock by preserving the hedgerow and erecting fences. It is the farmers responsibility to avoid obstructing the public Rights Of Way by providing and maintaining stiles, gates, and similar structures. If the structure benefits the farmer it is his responsibility to maintain. If not, such as a bridge over a ditch to a footpath, it is the Highways Authority.



Most landowners work closely with Highways to ensure everyone benefits. Virtually all Rights Of Way cross private land, but a landowner cannot close a path by taking unilateral action. Changes to paths can be made by diversion or stoppage, but only after all interested parties, such as Ramblers Groups, have been given the opportunity to object. In the case of non agreement , an inspector is appointed and an open inquiry held. In some cases this can continue to the high court.

The above was not intended to be a complete coverage of all aspects of the law but to give an understanding of the main areas. It is hoped this has been achieved

As walkers the law has been a major benefit to our enjoyment of the countryside. Long may this continue and long may we build on this to safeguard paths for future generations.

What do you think?

Please let us know your views on anything raised in this Newsletter.

Postal and e-mail addresses are on the front cover.

Membership application / Subscription renewal Form

The Bishop's Stortford & District Footpaths Association was founded in 1957 to "watch and take appropriate action for the safeguarding of public rights in respect of paths, bridleways, green lanes, commons, village greens and roadside verges" in the Hertfordshire and Essex border area around Bishop's Stortford extending across a radius of about 10 miles. We liaise with local Planning and Highways authorities and monitor proposals affecting Rights of Way. The Association can and does protest, if necessary, at a Public Inquiry.

We have published to date seven booklets recommending mainly circular walks of distances varying between 5 and 10 miles, which if still in print may be purchased in town bookshops and the Tourist Information Office. A new Walks Booklet has been published in 2012 and "Walks of the Month" are offered on our website.

We lead weekend walks of 5-7 miles throughout the year and also midweek evening walks of 2-4 miles in the summer. Details are found in the Walks Programmes published in the Newsletter and on the website. All are welcome.

If you would like to support our aims, please become a member and return this page with your details to the Membership Secretary c/o: 11 Bishop's Avenue, Bishop's Stortford, Herts, CM23 3EJ

The cost of annual subscription for family membership is £2.

I enclose a cheque for £..... being my/our subscription for 2012/13 (made payable to Bishop's Stortford & District Footpaths Association).

Name: (BLOCK LETTERS)

Address:

.....

Tel. No:

Email:

Please indicate below how you would like to receive your Newsletters (circle as appropriate):

Post

Email

Download from Website

Newsletters will not be sent by post unless specifically requested due to the high cost of postage.

Members details are held on record in compliance with the Data Protection Act, 1998.

Winter Walks 2012/13

For further information on each walk, please go to our website:
www.walksaroundstortford.org.uk

Date / Time	Start & Grid Reference	Walk Leader / Contact No
Sunday 4th November 10am	Allens Green : Outside the Queens Head * GR: 455169	John 07799804429
Sunday 18th November 10am	Hatfield Heath : village car park (behind chip shop) GR: 524150	Paul 01279 501596
Sunday 2nd December 10am	Manuden Church GR: 491267	Dave 01279 832632 0792 025 4825
Sunday 16th December 10am	Stansted Mountfitchet : Train station GR: 514248	Brian 01279 812574
Wednesday 26th December 10am	Sawbridgeworth : Bell St car park GR: 482148	Sarah 01279 723829 0741 141 1104
Sunday 13th January 10am	Wareside: White Horse pub * GR: 395155	Peter 01279 835036 0794 143 5001
Sunday 27th January 10am	Elsenham : Train station GR: 532270	Paul 01279 501596
Sunday 10th February 10am	Hatfield Broad Oak : village car park GR: 545166	Brian 01279 812574
Sunday 24th February 10am	Great Canfield : Parking in road by village hall GR: 586182	Alan 01371 876792
Sunday 10th March 10am	Standon Church GR: 396222	Dave 01279 832632 0792 025 4825
Sunday 24th March 10am	Matching Tye : The Fox pub * GR: 515112	Peter 01279 835036 0794 143 5001

The weekend walks are generally 5 - 6 miles long and normally last between 2 and 2 ½ hours.

* If you use the pub car park on these walks, please join the walk leader in the pub for a drink afterwards.

NOTE:

This Newsletter is available on the website. To respect members' privacy, leaders' surnames will no longer be included in the Programme. The website will give more details on the walk, including expected distance and any last minute changes. Those without internet access should continue to telephone the walk leaders.