

Founded: 1957

Registered Charity No: 1068733



Bishop's Stortford & District Footpaths Association



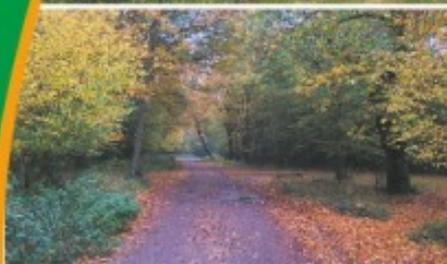
Safeguarding your Public Rights of Way in and around Bishop's Stortford



Spring 2013

Newsletter

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Vol 4



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**Bishop's Stortford & District
Footpaths Association**



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

Notification of AGM

The **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** will be held on: **Thursday 28th March 2013 at 7.45 pm** in the Day Centre, Apton Road, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 3SN.

Parking is available in Apton Road car park nearby.

AGENDA

- 1. Minutes of the AGM held on 28th March 2012**
- 2. Chairman's Statement and Report**
- 3. Secretary's Report**
- 4. Treasurer's Report**
- 5. Membership Subscription fees**
- 6. Election or Confirmation of reappointment of Officers**
 - a. Chairman**
 - b. Vice chairman**
 - c. Secretary**
 - d. Treasurer**
- 7. Election of members to the Committee**
- 8. Reappointment of Independent Examiner**
- 9. Questions from Members and Discussion**

BREAK FOR REFRESHMENTS

- 10. Talk given by: Bob Fenton, Rights of Way Service, Herts County Council**

Speaker at the AGM

Bob Fenton is the Countryside Access Team Leader. He has worked with the ROWS for over 11 years and has lived and worked in East Herts for over 40 years.

The Hertfordshire Rights of Way Service (ROWS) is responsible for a network of more than 3200kms of footpaths, bridleways, restricted bridleways, byways open to all traffic and other unmetalled highways throughout Hertfordshire. The team manages the maintenance and enforcement on the network and also maintains and investigates claims to modify the Definitive Map and Statement. It also seeks to develop and improve the network through planning gain and negotiations with landowners.

Agenda Item 5: Membership Subscription fees

The committee has voted to put to the membership a proposal to raise the annual subscription fee in order to allow the Association to continue to fund the bi-annual Newsletter and the website etc. It is proposed that the membership year runs from January to December and that the increase should take effect from January 2014. The proposed new fee is: £4 per year or £10 for 3 years (per household).

Welcome to the Spring 2013 newsletter.

Walkers have long promoted the benefits of a good walk in the countryside for mental and physical wellbeing. The benefits to the mind of getting out into the heart of the countryside, experiencing the solitude, and being at one with nature cannot be overstated. With open space comes mental breathing space, and when away from the distractions of home, work and urban life everything becomes simpler. One of the benefits of living in the Bishop's Stortford area is that such pleasures are literally on our door step. It is still possible to reach the edge of the Hertfordshire countryside within 15 minutes walk from the town centre. But for how much longer?



Major housing developments such as the ones planned for the Bishop's Stortford ASRs would change this relationship forever if approved. However, this is only one of many proposals for major urban development throughout our area – others include several speculative plans for housing in and around Stansted Mountfitchet, a new town between Elsenham and Henham, Harlow North and, a major residential development off Gilden Way near Old Harlow. I could also add Boris Johnson's pipedream of a new four runway hub at Stansted!

All these developments will have a direct or indirect impact on the rights of way network that we have sought to protect over the past 55 years. With such an unprecedented wave of development it is vital that organisations such as the BSDFA have the resources to join the debate and influence decisions. Unfortunately over the past few years it has become increasingly difficult for us to respond to all of these challenges, as despite frequent pleas to you our members, our committee remains small in number. At the AGM I will be repeating this plea but this time it is vital that we have a positive response as we have key positions to fill.

After two years at the helm I will be stepping down as chairman of the Association (but wish to remain on the committee). We have no nominees from the existing committee for this role and so we will need to look to our wider membership for a successor. The position is not for life, being for a one year term only, then subject to re-election if the chairman so wishes. It presents an opportunity for someone to bring in some fresh ideas and help influence our future direction in these challenging times. I urge you to give this some consideration as it is important for us to fill this post at the AGM. We are also in need of a vice-chairman and it would be great to recruit several new committee members too! If you are interested but would like a little more information then please do not hesitate to contact me.



Thank you for your continued support and I hope to see you at the AGM.

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

What do you think?

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

Postal and e-mail addresses are on Page 6.

Planning Application 3/13/0075/OP –
Land to the north of Bishop's Stortford (ASRs 1-4).

EHDC have received a planning application for outline permission to build up to 2,200 new homes, two primary schools, two mixed use local centres (including commercial and retail), park & ride for approximately 100 vehicles, on agricultural land to the north-west of Bishop's Stortford.

Three public Rights of Way (Bridleway 8, Footpath 1 and Footpath 2) will be affected by this development. All will be intersected by the primary estate road and/or proposed bus route, and FP2 (Wickham Cottages, Dane O'Coys to join BR5 north of the A120) is shown emerging adjacent to a proposed A120/primary estate road junction. New combined footpath/cycleways are being proposed but there is no indication in the planning application that these will be recognised as public ROW (appearing on the Definitve Statement and Map) and therefore afforded some protection in law. The planning application lacks detail as to the future integrity of the existing public ROW or the legal status of proposed new paths.

The planning application can be viewed online:

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=27017>

or click on the direct link to the planning application on the East Herts Homepage, 'Information Updates'. Paper copies can be viewed at Bishop's Stortford Town Council Offices, Windhill and at the East Herts District Council Offices in Bishop's Stortford and Hertford.

The public have until 31st March to comment, although representation made after this time will be considered.

For background information go to Save Our Stortford:

www.saveourstortford.org

or Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation: <http://www.stortfordcf.org.uk>

Many parts of East Herts, Harlow, Uttlesford and Epping Forest Districts are subject to development proposals. Do view planning applications in your area and if commenting on them to the relevant planning department do highlight their impact on the public ROW network where appropriate.

Reminder:

Have you paid your subscription for this year? If not, please fill in and post the form on page 6.

Bishop's Stortford Neighbourhood Plan.

The creation of a Neighbourhood Plan is a Government initiative to let local people have a say in how they would like their community to develop in the future (Localism). One has recently been set up in Bishop's Stortford covering the Silver Leys and the Meads wards of the town. These are considered to be the areas likely to be most affected by proposed large scale development such as Henderson's/Old River Lane and BSNC/ASRs. However, input to the Neighbourhood Plan is not restricted to residents of these wards. There will be an opportunity for the Association and individuals to highlight that Rights of Way and verges in Bishop's Stortford need protecting, to provide evidence of what problems currently exist, and to say what we all might like to see in the future (eg. providing 'missing links' in the PROW network).

You will find more information about the Neighbourhood Plan at Bishop's Stortford Town Council Offices on Windhill. There is a dedicated page on the Town Council website:

<http://www.bishopstortfordtc.gov.uk/towncouncil-details.php?id=32>.

Contact your local Bishop's Stortford town councillor or Bishop's Stortford Town Council Chief Executive, James Parker, to find out more.

Footpath 53 to Stay Open - Probably

After 8 years, and the waste of many thousands of pounds of public money in legal costs, it seems that the attempt by Hockerill Anglo European College to close Footpath (FP) 53 through the college grounds has failed. The County Council officers are minded to abandon the closure order made in 2009 and it seems likely that the Development Committee will agree.

The path is probably the most heavily used in the County and there were a record number of objections to closure by users and local organisations (including BSDFA).

After the closure order was made, the college applied instead for a Gating Order to close the path at night but the County Council has decided that such an order is not justified since there are few incidents of crime or antisocial behaviour.

While the matter of FP53 was in dispute, the College erected an electronically operated gate on the entrance to the college grounds from Manor Road. Local residents and users of the entrance presented evidence that the path from Manor Road to FP53 had been used as a public right of way for over 50 years. The County Council accepted the evidence and ordered that the path be added to the Definitive Map of public rights of way as FP85. The college and one local resident have objected. The order cannot be confirmed by the council whilst these objections exist.

It seems likely that a Public Inquiry will be necessary to establish FP85 as a right of way.



Field edge path, nr Moreton, May 2012

Footpath and Bridleway Diversions.

Changes to the footpath network are inevitable. Many of these are not due to a wish to dismantle rights of way which have existed for hundreds of years, but to enable changes to be made in the name of "progress". The widening of existing roads or the creation of new ring roads, and the building of additional housing even if we disagree with them, bring benefits to the general public. Diversions requested by local landowners very rarely do.

When major infrastructure works take place, the ability to maintain existing rights of way is difficult and usually (if care is not taken) the resulting diversions are not used. As in the case of paths running alongside a dual carriageway. The single path diversion gives users a better chance to influence the outcome.

The law is clear: under section 119 of the 1980 Highways Act, councils are given the power to divert footpaths and bridleways. The council has to be satisfied that, in the interests of the landowner, "it is expedient" to divert a path. The proposed changes then have to be publicised by use of newspapers and local notices. There are time limits for response by members of the public. If no one objects, the diversion can go ahead. In the event there are objections, and it is not possible for council officers to agree a compromise with all parties, the council has to submit the plan to the Secretary of State. This can lead to a public inquiry.

The important issue concerns the criteria used in the decision making process. Firstly the existing path must remain open and useable until such time as the order is made for its closure. At the same time the new path has to have been created so the public can view it. Secondly the new path should not be "substantially less convenient" for the public than the path it replaces. Thirdly the path must start and end at the same locations, or locations on the same highway. Finally the new path must not impact on the 'public enjoyment of the footpath as a whole'.

These requirements are there for the public to use to ensure the Rights of Way network is not dismantled by forces with little interest in the heritage aspect, its health benefits or the simple joy of walking.

A Few Thoughts from an Old Rambler

Prior to the first world war life in our local countryside had changed relatively little since medieval times. Large numbers of people with large families worked on the farms and in the big houses and if they had to go anywhere, they walked. Only the toffs rode horses or travelled in traps. There would have been networks of paths everywhere between habitations and places of work, and people walked almost anywhere that was open. The most used and the most direct paths were those connecting the market towns with the outlying villages which were not on the main roads.

The coming of mechanisation and the demand for more efficient food production during the wars caused rapid changes and a dramatic reduction in the numbers of people working on the farms resulting in a population shift to the towns. After the last war it was felt that there was a need for townfolk to have access to the great outdoors which led to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949. County Councils were instructed to draw up Definitive Maps of Public Rights of Way off the highways and presumably were guided by recommendations from District and Parish Councils. Our present network of public footpaths, bridleways and byways was "defined" during the 1950's and no doubt it was an opportunity for landowners to "rationalise" some paths as many of those shown on old maps did not become rights of way.

The main paths into Bishop's Stortford were retained and can be seen on the map as spokes radiating from the hub, although with a few kinks and diversions. These spokes still provide the most direct access out of the town and in the first book of walks published by this Association in 1959, ten out of the twelve walks utilise these routes. Such paths were originally used for both outward and return journeys and not the circular walks which we enjoy today, and there are few footpath links between them until one gets a few miles out of town. This means that there are not a great many short walks around the town without using roads.

During the 1950's I walked right round the outer boundaries of Bishop's Stortford keeping to the fields and avoiding roads where possible, but not always on footpaths. Checking the route on the map as far as I can remember it, the distance was 11 to 12 miles. To do a similar walk today round the expanded town and with more no-go areas one would be faced with a hike of about 18 miles.

Nordic walking – what's it all about?

Well, it's an increasingly popular way of getting some of the renowned fitness benefits of cross country skiing (you know, the energetic skiing), without having to either slide around on snow, learn the art of using dry land roller skis or work out in the gym on the cross trainer. Special lightweight poles get the upper body working as well as the legs, and help to propel you along. This means that you work harder (thereby using more calories than ordinary walking), but the support given by the poles makes it feel easier. It's an activity suitable for all, and is a great way of exercising in the fresh air, having a chat along the way and getting energised. Some of the principles used in Nordic walking can also be related to the use of the usually heavier and chunkier hiking poles, with which you may already be familiar, thereby improving the efficiency of their use, and the benefit you feel.

If you would like to give Nordic walking a try, qualified and experienced instructor (and BSDFA member) Jane Leary takes regular small group walks, at both brisk and easier paces, in parks and countryside in East Herts and West Essex, and would be pleased to introduce newcomers to the pleasures and benefits of walking with poles. If you would prefer to learn as an individual or with a friend, personal instruction can be arranged.

Get moving this spring with Nordic walking!

For details of forthcoming walks take a look at: http://your.nordicwalking.co.uk/jane_leary

Contact Jane on 07903 404225 or orjanealeary@gmail.com



Some of Jane's Nordic walkers enjoying autumn colours and spring bluebells.

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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 eight booklets recommending mainly circular walks of distances varying between 5 and 10 miles, the most recent in 2012. "Walks of the Month" are offered on our website.

We lead weekend walks of 5-7 miles throughout the year. 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 2013 (made payable to Bishop's Stortford & District Footpaths Association)

Name: (BLOCK LETTERS)

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(circle as appropriate):

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

Summer Walks 2013

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 21st April 10am	Great Dunmow: Recreation Ground car park, Braintree Road. GR: 634219	Alan 01371 876792
Sunday 5th May 10am	Hunsdon: Post Office GR: 416140	Peter 01279 835036 0794 143 5001
Sunday 19th May 10am	Clavering Village Hall GR: 481324	Dave 01279 832632 0792 025 4825
Sunday 23rd June 10am	Hazel End: Three Horse Shoes Pub GR: 497241	Brian 01279 812574
Sunday 7th July 10am	Much Hadham: Ye Olde Red Lion GR: 428196	Paul 01279 501596

Summer Break

Sunday 8th September 10am	Green Tye: Prince of Wales pub GR: 444184	John 07799804429
Sunday 22nd September 10am	Spellbrook: Three Horseshoes pub GR: 487175	Sarah 01279 723829 0741 141 1104
Sunday 6th October 10am	Brent Pelham Church GR: 434308	Dave 01279 832632 0792 025 4825
Sunday 20th October 10am	Hatfield Heath : village car park (behind chip shop) GR: 524150	Peter 01279 835036 0794 143 5001

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

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.