



Autumn 2016

Newsletter

Founded: 1957

Registered Charity No: 1068733



www.walksaroundstortford.org.uk

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



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

Hello and welcome to our Autumn 2016 newsletter.

The dry and warm late summer weather has provided ideal conditions to explore the local rights of way network and I've taken the opportunity to revisit some familiar routes. An article by David Glass highlights that some of them will be adversely impacted if Network Rail implements its extensive rail crossing closure plans across the Anglia Region. We are working with local councillors and other like-minded groups to ensure that Network Rail take a sensible approach that meets the best interests of the local community. You can make a difference through your continued support of the Association and by making individual representations to Network Rail during the consultation process.

On a more positive note we are well advanced in planning for our 60th anniversary next year and our Secretary, Sylvia Hayes, provides an update on our preparations. If you have any memories of the Association that you would like to share with us then Sylvia would be delighted to hear from you.

Don't forget that you can keep track of the latest Association news through our website or by following us on Facebook.

Happy walking.

Historic paths in danger

I wouldn't be surprised if the royal assent of the Deregulation Act 2015 earlier this year passed you by but a small part of it has an impact on paths that are not currently recorded on the definitive map. For those of you who are interested in the detail the relevant sections are 20-26 and schedule 7.

On 1 January 2026, the Government intends to close the definitive maps (the official record of the public's rights of way in an area) to any historic path claims which existed before 1949. The creation of the definitive map was never meant to be open-ended and over the years various governments have tried to impose a deadline for recording older paths. It was the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) which officially introduced the cut-off date for adding historic paths to definitive maps. Its aim was to provide certainty to landowners regarding the highways that exist on their land. However, following opposition from groups such as the Open Spaces Society and the Ramblers the original cut-off date of 1 January 2016 was put back ten years.

The Deregulation Act will speed up the processing and determination of path claims. The process is complex and as a consequence the surveying authorities (Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils in our area) have a significant and growing backlog of claims to deal with. Now that the act is in place, a route application when submitted by a claimant to the surveying authority must be assessed to ensure that it reaches a basic standard. The surveying authority will then contact the landowner, and may offer a simultaneous diversion to consider if that will make the claim palatable to them and avoid time-consuming and costly objections. If the surveying authority does not act on a claim within a certain period, the claimant can seek a court order directing it to act. There are other provisions in the act that aim to speed-up the process.

We are very lucky to have an extensive rights of way network in our area but if you are aware of any paths that could be impacted by this legislation then please let us know. A path that is not on the definitive map has no protection and could be closed or developed.

Dave Webber

Chairman:	Dave Webber	Website:	www.walksaroundstortford.org.uk
Vice Chairman:	Vacant	Association Address:	29 St Johns Crescent Stansted Essex CM24 8JT
Secretary:	Sylvia Hayes	e-mail:	secretary@walksaroundstortford.org.uk
Membership Secretary:	Maggy Rapley		
Treasurer:	Bob Dean	Newsletter Editor:	Peter Hales
Footpath Secretary:	Vacant	Publicity:	Daphne Wallace-Jarvis
Website Manager:	Brian Hayes		

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.

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:

4 Chandlers Close, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 4FF

The cost of annual subscription for family membership is £4 or £10 for 3 years.

I enclose a cheque for £.....being my/our subscription for 1 year / 3 years plus £.....donation (optional). Please circle or delete as applicable.
(Cheques made payable to Bishop's Stortford & District Footpaths Association)

Name: (BLOCK LETTERS)

Address:

.....

Tel. No: **e-mail:**

Newsletters will be sent by e-mail twice a year.

60th Anniversary Event

Bishop's Stortford and District Footpaths Association was formed on 18th March 1957 by a small public spirited group of people after an attempt by the then Braughing Rural District Council to close a footpath in the Twyford Bury area which had been unused for some time owing to obstructions by the landowner. This attempt caused some 'considerable indignation' by local organisations & individuals so a public meeting was called and the Association was set up with a minimum subscription of 2/6d (twelve and a half pence in today's money) or 1/- (five pence) for those under 21.

Today the Association still has documents dating back to this time and with the help of Bishop's Stortford Museum we are currently in the process of digitising them so they can be stored on a secure server for the future. The paper copies may then be donated to Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) who can store them in a suitable environment free of charge. To celebrate the 60th anniversary next year's AGM will be held on the exact date at the Museum with a small exhibition showing the history of the Association.

Many people connected with the early days are no longer with us but we hope if any members of their families read this they may have memories, items, further documents and especially photographs that could enhance our display.

We are particularly interested in information on **William Hovell Turner**, a founding member, who lived in Barrell's Down Road and moved to Loughton before his death in 1979.

Also **Harry O. Skitt, F.M White, William Hughes, Leonard.W.A. Green, R.B. Moore, Harry Hammond Thistleton, G.W. Parkin and Mrs Hart** (only ever referred to in this form!) are regularly mentioned in early documents so they are of particular interest. We are lucky enough to still be in touch with some long serving members who will hopefully be able to enhance our event with their own personal stories.

If you think you may have anything of interest please contact our secretary, Sylvia Hayes, on 01279 812574 or e-mail hayessk@sky.com.



William Turner (who founded the association) and his wife Maisie who were both committee members for many years (photo taken in 1972)

Anglia Level Crossing Proposals

Network Rail have proposals for the possible closure or change to Public Rights of Way (PRoW) at over 130 of its level crossings in the Anglia region. Details can be found on line at <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/anglialevelcrossings/>.

This is aggressive and when completed will be permanent, having a significant impact on the walking routes we have used and probably taken for granted.

This article includes the crossings between Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth and Fullers End, north of Stansted.

Two regularly used crossings in Bishop's Stortford are not in the proposals:

1. Cannons Mill Lane – which is retained as a stop/look/listen crossing.
2. New bridge across Footpath Bishop's Stortford 005. This exits on Thorley Street just south of Whittington Way.

Bishop's Stortford Crossings Under Threat

Of the six between Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth the proposal is to close 4 of them. (Johnsons Crossing in Bishop's Stortford is to remain. (Hardly surprising as National Rail have only recently built a bridge.) A private crossing at "Fowlers", Thorley is under review.

To close are:

1. "Tednambury" Sawbridgeworth (Footpath Sawbridgeworth 03)
2. "Twyford Road" Bishop's Stortford (Footpath Bishop's Stortford 68)
3. "Gilston", Thorley (Footpath Thorley 07, which exits onto Thorley Street next to the Coach and Horses public house)
4. "Pattens", Thorley (Footpath Thorley 22 and the entrance to Thorley Wash Nature Reserve from Thorley Street)

Of these the least impacted would be Tednambury where there is a farm bridge about 150 metres to the south of the crossing and the proposal is to utilise this adding about 170 metres to the route. The full route will be on existing or new footpaths. There would be no diversion onto a main highway.

Twyford Road, Pattens and Gilston would all include a diversion to pavements alongside a public highway (London Road or Thorley Street. Both are major and heavy traffic through routes). Network Rail have calculated a risk factor to justify closure, however there is no information regarding the increased risk of walking adjacent to a road. National Rail quote 317 trains passing through the crossings daily. A 2011 survey for London Road shows the weekday volume reached 6054 between the hours of 7 am to 7 pm and 4954 on the weekend. Thorley Street was 6550 for the weekday volume and 4508 for the weekend between 7 am and 7 pm. What is the risk to pedestrians diverted onto the pavements?

Twyford Road

The diversion for the Twyford Road crossing is north along Twyford Road, London Road and returning along the river Stort. According to Network Rail the diversion would result in an

additional 400 metres to the route. I don't know how they measure this as I make it 1 kilometre from one side of the crossing to the other via the diversion. Last year they had alternative proposals, adding a span under the rail bridge over the Stort (adjacent to the Baptist Church). This added 250 metres to the route. This was not part of the current proposal but I believe is still an option.

It should also be taken into consideration that the current Twyford Road route provides a good tarmac surface and is wide with plenty of light:

Boat residents use this crossing to get children to and from school.

It provides a good walking surface, and is wide.

For other residents and users, the crossing provides quick access into an informal recreation area and the River Stort towpath.

From a sample of interviews from users - cyclists, parents with children and/or buggies and elderly persons they feel it is a 'safe route' - they did not want a longer route, they do not want a narrow muddy footpath or a route which takes them into 'dark unfriendly areas' and the suggestion of a bridge made them concerned for personal safety and vulnerability. (Although a bridge is not one of the current options.)

Twyford Road and the other two crossings under threat (Gilston (Thorley 07) and Pattens (Thorley 22)) need to be looked at separately. The majority of users of the Twyford Road rail crossing are 'pedestrians' and not 'walkers' and do not go out wearing walking boots. Whereas the majority of users of the latter two would be walkers, including with dogs, and would be more appropriately dressed for the rural paths.

Gilston (Thorley 07) and Pattens (22)

There are two options for the crossings at Gilston (Thorley 07) and Pattens (Thorley 22). The first option (Network Rails preferred) in both cases would be to use an existing underpass on Thorley Wash, about half way between the two crossings. It has reduced headroom and National Rail states it requires further investigation. I walked it the beginning of October and there was standing water then, even after a relatively dry summer. What will it be like in the winter? Unless significant work is done the underpass could be flooded more often than not in the winter. National Rail state Option A will add about 1 km for either route.

Option B for Gilston (Thorley 07) is to close it and use the new bridge on Thorley 05. To me this is not much of an option as it is my preferred route when walking from the River Stort to the footpaths to the west of Bishops Stortford around Thorley. I personally use Thorley 07 far more than Thorley 05.

According to National Rail Option B for Pattens (Thorley 22) will add 1.2 km, again using the bridge over Thorley 05. I do not see how they calculate this as the distance from the crossing on the east of the railway to the crossing on the west via Thorley 5 is about 1.5 miles! I am not sure of the preferred route for visitors to Thorley Wash Nature Reserve, but it seems to me that it could be significantly longer for many people.

There is an alternative that would remove most of the diversion on the pavements and that is existing land between Thorley Street and the Railway line. There is a useable track here, but it is not part of the current proposals although I believe it is worth considering. There is also a private crossing near to the underpass. Again I would suggest this is worth pursuing as an alternative Public Right of Way if it is considered the crossing should stay open for the current user.

Fullers End

The Fullers End crossing is important as this hamlet is part of Elsenham. The alternative crossing using the underpass is not a suitable alternative route. It is not felt by users to offer a safe environment along which to walk - it is dark, narrow and generally unpleasant and through the winter months unsociable, even with a tarmac surface. The other proposed routes are considerably longer and take the user across fields. This pedestrian crossing is well used because it is an old road. It is convenient and has a tarmac surface. As with the Twyford crossing, this access is a wide road, and there is a lot of width and light and therefore feels safe. Again, as with Twyford, residents of Fullers end use this crossing to visit the Elsenham shops and post office and on this sort of trip would not normally need to wear walking boots.

General

Rail crossings are not inherently unsafe if you take common sense measures and stop, look and listen. In all cases there is adequate sighting in both directions. Although Network Rail has put safety of level crossing users as the top benefit it is clearly not the main reason. In my view it is primarily a cost cutting exercise under the pretext of safety. If measures are required to improve safety then why not add audio and visual alarms and leave the footpaths for the users? The fact that there has been no incidents at Gilston, Pattens and Fullers End between 2011 and 2015 indicates that these crossings are not inherently unsafe. There have been incidents at Twyford Road but to me this indicates the current safety measures need to be modified.

The Stage 2 consultation has now finished. Over the next few months Network Rail will analyse the feedback from the public, engage with landowners and stakeholders and by early to mid-2017 make a submission under the Transport and Works Act Order to the Secretary of State with their final proposals for closure of the crossings. Formal notices will be served and published providing a final opportunity for the public to object.

The public and other interested parties will have 42 days from the date of submission to make representations to the Secretary of State. If objections are received the Secretary of State may decide on one of three options: hold a public enquiry; hold a hearing; exchange written representations between relevant parties.

By the published time table the Secretary of State will make a final decision by early to mid-2018. Work will then start on the closures 2018 / 2019.

However, a lot can happen and many of the interested parties, including the Ramblers and County Councils are starting to take the closures a bit more seriously and talking to each other, hopefully to provide a more consolidated approach. Something that didn't seem to be happening during the Stage 1 proposals.

It is important that anyone with a strong view should take the opportunity to review and comment on the final proposals when the opportunity arises early next year.

David Glass, with additional material provided by Daphne Wallis-Jarvis

Winter 2016 / 2017 Walks

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 6th November 10am	Pig lane car park GR: TL494193 Post Code: CM22 7PA	Phoebe 07722589571
Sunday 20th November 10am	Pishiobury Park GR: TL47551400 Post Code: CM21 0AL	Paul 01279 501596 07977371435
Sunday 4th December 10am	Allens Green (meet on road by the Queens Head). GR: TL455169 Post Code: CM21 0LS	Dave 01279 832632 07920254825
Sunday 18th December 10am	Manuden House, on the road opposite GR: TL490271 Post Code: CM23 1DF	Brian 01279 812574
Monday 26th December 10:30 am	Stansted to Birchanger Wood Meet in castle car park GR: TL515 248 Post code: CM24 8SP	Daphne 01279812259

Winter Break

Sunday 5th February 10am	Thremhall Park between Start Hill and Takeley Street off B1250, Turn left at traffic lights if approaching from Bishop's Stortford on B1250. (the old A120). GR: TL53252145	Paul 01279 501596 07977371435
Sunday 19 th February 10am	Hunsdon Post Office GR: TL417140 Post Code: SG12 8NH	Peter 01279 835036 07941435001
Sunday 5th March 10am	St Andrew's Church, Much Hadham GR: TL430197 Post Code: SG10 6DH	Dave 01279 832632 07920254825
Saturday 18 th March	AGM, Rhodes Centre	
Sunday 19th March 10am	Nags Head, Dunmow Road, Bishop's Stortford GR: TL CM23 5HP	Dave 01279 832632 07920254825 Peter 01279 835036 07941435001

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

On sale now: £6

21 walks from 3 - 9 miles

Available from:

Bishop's Stortford Tourist Office

Waterstones, Bishop's Stortford

Amazon.co.uk

Walk Leaders

*Walks in
Herts
& Essex*

Vol 4



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



Founded 1987 Registered Charity No. 1042720
Safeguarding your Public Rights of Way in and around Bishop's Stortford

