



# NEWSLETTER - Spring 2010

www.walksaroundstortford.org.uk



Bishop's Stortford & District  
Footpaths Association

Founded: 1957

Registered Charity No: 1068733

**Chairman  
& General Secretary:** Sylvia McDonald

**Vice Chairman :** Dave Webber

**Membership Secretary  
& Treasurer:** Christine Ross

**Website Manager:** Brian Hayes

**Association Address:** 6 Hawthorn Rise  
Thorley Street  
Bishop's Stortford  
Herts  
CM23 4AW

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

## **Notification of AGM**

The **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** will be held on **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010 at 7.45 pm** in the Day Centre, Apton Road, Bishop's Stortford. Parking in Apton Rd car park nearby.

At the conclusion of official business there will be a break for refreshments and an on-line presentation of our newly launched Website, followed by a talk entitled **Walking My Way** by **John Merrill**. Our speaker is a marathon walker par excellence, renowned author of walking books, and the first person, in 1978, to walk the entire coastline of Britain - 6,824 miles in ten months.

You are cordially invited to attend and bring friends.

In accordance with the Rules of the Association members and affiliated bodies are invited to submit nominations for officers and members of the Executive Committee. Anyone willing to serve on the Committee should write to the Secretary c/o:

6 Hawthorn Rise, Thorley Street,  
Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM23 4AW.

## **AGENDA**

1. **Minutes of the AGM held on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009**
2. **Chairman's Statement and Report**
3. **Secretary and Treasurer's Report**
4. **Election or Confirmation of reappointment of Officers**
  - a. **Chairman**
  - b. **Vice chairman**
  - c. **Secretary**
  - d. **Treasurer**
6. **Election of members to the Committee**
7. **Proposal to increase annual subscription from £1 to £2**
8. **Reappointment of Independent Examiner**
9. **Questions from Members and Discussion**

*BREAK FOR REFRESHMENTS  
ON-LINE WEBSITE PRESENTATION*

10. **Talk entitled Walking My Way**

## Proposal to increase annual subscription from £1 to £2

The annual subscription has been held at £1 for several years now. Unfortunately the cost of stamps and stationery used to produce the newsletters have been steadily increasing and we also now have the website to maintain and keep up to date. In order to ensure that we can continue to provide these services to members, the committee felt that this was an appropriate time to raise the annual subscription to £2. We feel that this is still representing excellent value for money to our members and hope that the proposal is supported.

### Brief biography of our AGM speaker: John Merrill

From his web site at <http://www.johnmerrillwalkguides.com> we learn:

Few people have walked the earth's crust more than John Merrill with more than 200,000 miles in the last 40 years - the average person walks 75,000 miles in a lifetime. Apart from walking too much causing bones in his feet to snap, like metal fatigue, he has never suffered from any back, hip or knee problems. Like other walkers he has suffered from many blisters, his record is 23 on both feet! He wears out at least three pairs of boots a year and his major walking has cost over £150,000. This includes 106 pairs of boots costing more than £11,500 and over £2,500 on socks - a pair of socks last three weeks and are not washed!

Today he is as fit as ever. He has never broken a bone or twisted his ankle. He uses the same knees, hips and feet that he was born with. His marathon walks in Britain include:

Hebridean Journey.....1,003 miles.  
Northern Isles Journey.....913 miles.  
Irish Island Journey .....1,578 miles.  
Parkland Journey.....2,043 miles.  
Land's End to John o' Groats.....1,608 miles.  
East of England Heritage Route.....450 miles

In 1978 he became the first person to walk the entire coastline of Britain - 6,824 miles in ten months.

He has written hundreds of walking books.

### FP 53, Hockerill: To Gate or not to Gate

This is the question still exercising legal minds. Readers of earlier Newsletters will have been following this drawn out saga since the Anglo-European School at Hockerill applied for footpath closure on grounds of pupil protection. The County preference currently is to make gating orders, rather than closure orders, to solve the problem, but a policy must first be developed to cover all eventualities, there being no precedent for gating orders in the County.

A policy has been prepared and passed in committee, but is now with statutory bodies (such as police, fire service etc.), whose comments must be considered before a policy can be formally adopted prior to an order being made.

Phil Tripp, our committee member who has been at the head of the campaign representing the Association's objections to footpath closure, reports that we too will eventually be receiving a copy of the policy as a user body, and we will be able to express our views on practical issues such as day and night time locking of the gates. We will also have the normal right to object once a gating order has been made and before it can be confirmed.

Meanwhile, the newly proposed Footpath 85 linking Manor Road to FP53, which was already de facto in existence will remain closed in spite of objections from users until FP53 has been gated - or not! This is still the question.

### FP 12 in Great Canfield

Our Footpaths secretary reports that this footpath has now been officially diverted from its original route through the grounds of Barbary cottage in Fitzjohns Lane. Where the path reaches the western boundary of Barbary Cottage, the new route runs up a track in a north-easterly direction to meet Fitzjohns Lane a few yards down from the cricket field. Walkers who have encountered the problem on this path over recent years will be pleased that the situation has been resolved. A fingerpost has yet to be installed on the lane.

## Protection of verges

Member Michael Hurford untiringly continues on the Association's behalf to seek proper solution to verge obstruction problems, most notably in Maze Green Road, where after 7 years total success still eludes us. So far, with support from the Ombudsman and Kate Ashbrook of the Open Spaces Society (OSS) we have only won a few, albeit significant, skirmishes.

Michael's report below, on a separate verge issue, may give us reason to hope.

"It is not often that we can announce a victory in our long running battle to prevent highway verges from obstruction or from being incorporated into a frontager's garden. I reported three flagrant breaches in Bishop's Stortford to the Highways Department a year ago and have, this month, received copies of letters to the offenders requiring them to take down the obstructions.

In addition, one of the roads - the unmade up section of Dane O'Coys Road - is signed as a private road. This is not true as it is shown on the 1910 Finance Act map as a public highway. The frontagers have been told to take these signs down.

All this work, not only by me but also by the officers in the Highways and Legal Departments, could have been avoided if there were some system of prevention rather than cure. In context of the long standing fight to clear Maze Green Road verges from obstruction, I have failed to persuade Mr Steptoe, Head of Planning in EHDC, that the addition of a simple paragraph in planning approval notices would save much public money. His view is that it is the Highways Department's job to deal with transgressors.

I have been helped by Cllr Ralph Gilbert, and we shall not give up in finding a solution to this verge problem."

## Parish paths partnerships (PPP)

Parish councils are encouraged across the country to set up PPP groups to work on projects such as path clearance, surfacing, signing and mapping.

In Thorley, the PPP group is in the middle of a mapping project, which is complex for a number of reasons. Historically, footpaths in the ancient agricultural settlement of Thorley have been used as best suited to the needs of the farming community (which do not necessarily match up with lines drawn on maps). Extensive housing development and road building in Thorley have necessitated close examination of the parish footpath and bridleway network.

There are two main problems. One is that Planning and Highways Departments do not often work together, with

the result that houses have been built on footpaths, and diversions to facilitate road building have been recorded inaccurately. The other is that farmers arbitrarily re-route paths on their land, and new homeowners move fences or take over verges.

The Thorley situation is probably typical - more so than one realises, of the overall Rights of Way picture in this area, and it could well be that liaison between our Association and PPP groups in the parishes we cover would be of mutual benefit. On-line communication is a great facilitator, which perhaps we should now begin to exploit!

## Update on BAA plans for 2nd runway at Stansted

Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) reported on 11th February 2010 that the Secretary of State for Communities has asked the airport operator to state whether it still wants to continue with its current planning application for a second runway, and warned that if so, the information provided when it submitted the application almost two years ago will need to be updated and the Public Inquiry cannot start until after the next General Election which must be held no later than 3 June.

BAA figures published on 10th February show that Stansted handled fewer passengers last year than in any year since 2003 and fewer flights than in any year since 2002. It is now operating at only about half of its present capacity. So uncertainty and blight go on.

## Felling of trees on the towpath at Twyford Lock

The last of the trees along the river bank of the towpath on both sides of Pig Lane have fallen foul of British Waterways chainsaws - in spite of residents' long beseeching, and in the face of MP Mark Prisk's intervention at high level. BW's entrenched position and refusal to engage in meaningful discussion with representatives of walkers, birdwatchers, fishermen, photographers and others enjoying the scenic beauty of this particular stretch of the waterway have meant that the denuded banks looking away from town now offer to the eye merely stumps and distances of blank sameness. BW chainsaw gangs are unstoppably implementing a 'Clear all banks' policy throughout the UK, regardless of the health of the trees and the wishes of local people. The deed is now irrevocably done.

## Revival of plans to rebuild existing schools in greenbelt

Well, we were right to remain vigilant! The schools' applications were withdrawn in autumn 2008, but only temporarily, as we now discover from material requested by Thorley residents under the Freedom of Information Act and from local newspaper coverage of views on the matter from the very recently appointed Head of the Herts & Essex Girls' School.

Submissions of the revised applications to the Planning Department are imminent, but in essence nothing altered to warrant removal of any of the reasons for objection! The main difference will be that school buildings and access roads will have been removed closer to the bypass and away from the Hertfordshire Way footpath. On the good side, this at least will

prevent the Right of Way from becoming a feature of the car park! But on the other hand, more of the peaceful scenery and quiet enjoyment of the greenbelt countryside through which the path runs will have been violated by the wider, and higher, spread of intrusive building.

Our Association will join forces with objectors as before, if only to make the strong point that loss of greenbelt countryside to massive change on gargantuan scale such as that being proposed is too high a price to pay for unrealistic and unproven claims that this would be in the best future educational, cultural and social interests of our children. In planning terms, only "exceptional educational need" can override the principle of greenbelt protection. So, first prove it!

## Herts County Council on-line Definitive Maps

We are fortunate in Hertfordshire to have access to an extensive rights of way network of over 5,200 paths totalling more than 3,000km (i). The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 placed a duty on every county council in England & Wales to draw up and publish a Definitive Map and Statement for their area. The recording of a right of way on the definitive map is a legal record of its existence at the date of the map. The Definitive Statement accompanies the Definitive Map and provides a written description of each path shown on the map.

Each Definitive Map and Statement has a "relevant date" which provides evidence that the rights of way existed at this date. It is possible that a legal change, such as a footpath diversion, has happened since that date and is not recorded on the map.

In Hertfordshire, the first Definitive Map was drafted in 1953 and has been republished in 1988, 1991, 2000 and 2005 to include any legal changes that have occurred since then. These details together with the Definitive Map and Statement are available for public inspection. In the past, the Definitive Map for a local area could only be viewed at the local library or the District/Borough Council offices. In order to view the Definitive Map and Statement for the whole county a trip to County Hall was required.

Recently Hertfordshire County Council has created a web version of the Definitive Map which can be found on their HertsDirect website. The site also includes details of the Definitive Statement for each parish. The following web link will take you to the relevant page:

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/envroads/environment/countryside/walkingandridding/row/>

The information recorded on Definitive Maps is used by the Ordnance Survey to show public rights of way on its Explorer (1:25,000 scale) and Landranger (1:50,000 scale) maps. Although it should be noted that these maps also show non-definitive paths as well.

*(i) Source - Hertfordshire County Council.*

## Village Fairs

We find every year when we set up our stall at a town fete or village fair, usually at Standon and Sawbridgeworth and sometimes Bishop's Stortford, that our maps and photographs of local footpaths attract a lot of attention, and we invariably recruit new members and sell our Walks Booklets.

Last summer we set up stall in Hatfield Heath. It was a very productive day and has encouraged us to consider taking our gazebo, display boards and tables to villages further afield. If members know of fetes we could usefully visit, please do let the secretary know.

Villages covered by the Association are:

In Essex - the Hallingburys, Hatfield Heath and Broad Oak, the Canfields, Takeley, Sheering, Matching, Chickney, Broxton, Tilty, Newport, Widdington, Wickham Bonhunt, Quendon & Rickling;

In Herts - Albury, the Hadhams, Widford, Thorley, Standon, the Pelhams, Westmill, Buntingford, Wareside, Thundridge, Wyddial;

Cross boundary - Farnham, Birchanger, Stansted, Berden, Manuden, Clavering, High Wych, Hunsdon, Eastwick, Gilston, Meesden, Langley.

## The Birchanger Wood Trust: [www.birchangerwoodtrust.org](http://www.birchangerwoodtrust.org)

Pat Forrest, warden of Birchanger Wood, with his talk to us at our last AGM and his guided tour of the Wood last Autumn, has captured the interest of our Association, and we welcome the update he gives us on fundraising progress now being made in support of his work. Pat writes:

"Spring is on the horizon in the Woodland, with new shoots showing through, the flora and fauna poised to burst into life once more following the particularly severe winter.

The Trust too is also poised on the brink of a new horizon. Having recently welcomed a new and committed fund raising team into our ranks, we are confident that the support of this addition will herald a new era for the Birchanger Wood Trust.

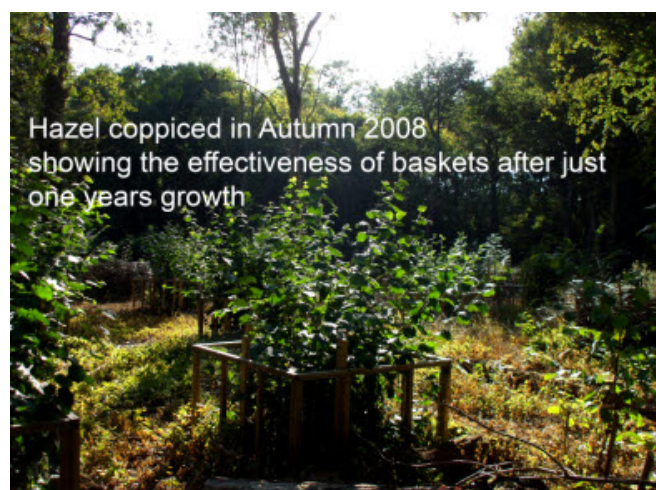
As well as this boost for the Trust we have also secured a substantial grant from the Forestry Commission, dependent on designated works being undertaken and approved by them. These are to include picnic benches and tables to be made from the Spanish Chestnuts which have had to be felled due to disease this year; re-instatement of an eco-pond in the woodland – this was lost some 15 years ago when the car park was built at Birchwood School, and the introduction of bird boxes to retain and encourage the 28 known species to inhabit the woodland.

It is anticipated that the occupiers of the bird boxes will also deal with our winter moth problem by using them as a natural food source!!!

Finally and possibly most importantly for the conservation of the wood, the Forestry Commission have "rubber stamped" the plans for a network of pathways throughout the woodland, the initial and main one to run the perimeter from the Focus Superstore to Birchwood School, and to be undertaken this year.

All in all the future of our valuable woodland looks a lot brighter than ever before, so to pun a phrase we are definitely moving into 2010 with a "Spring in our Step!!"

*Photos courtesy of the the Birchanger Wood Trust website.*



## Web site Update

Much of the Autumn Newsletter was taken up with an introduction to development and usage of the planned new website, as far as it could be envisaged at the time. The Association's web site has been on-line since 1st December 2009. This Spring 2010 Newsletter will be the first to be sent out electronically to members.

The website allows people to report footpath problems that they have come across - either directly to the relevant County Council or via us. It also gives up to date information about the various walks that are organised and features a different walk every month for people to walk at their leisure.

These monthly walks are generally not too arduous and are intended to introduce walkers to the Rights of Way in our local countryside. Once you are familiar with the area we encourage you, with the aid of a local map, to explore all those footpaths which you will have passed when following our detailed routes. This will help the Bishop's Stortford & District Footpaths Association in the preservation of our Rights of Way because one of the most effective means of doing this is to ensure that footpaths and bridleways are used regularly. An example of these walks is printed on page 8.

We have recently started to monitor the usage of the site and in the last month or so we have received over 150 visits, about 30% of which have been from people accessing the site for the first time. On average 6 pages are viewed on each visit.

A new feature on the web site is the "Topic for Discussion". We want to hear your views on issues relating to footpaths and walking. The first topic is whether walkers should walk across cross-field paths that have not been clearly marked and may also be recently ploughed or have crops growing across the line of the footpath. Please join in the debate by clicking on the "Topics for Discussion" link on the web site.

The content and style of the web site is continually evolving and all comments are welcome. Please e-mail us at: [contact@walksaroundstortford.org.uk](mailto:contact@walksaroundstortford.org.uk).

Work is moving forward really well with support from Nicole Drath, our web builder and desk help. We look forward to discussion with members at our AGM on 16th March, when the website will be demonstrated by Web Manager Brian Hayes.

## Midweek Walks

In spring last year the committee chairman, Sylvia McDonald, took on the task of organising the midweek short walks programme that Phil Tripp had initiated so successfully some years earlier.

Sylvia is proposing to lead 3 walks every two weeks, on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. They will be 2-mile or 4-mile walks starting at 10.00am or 10.30am. Non-members will be welcome. The pace will be more for ambler than hardened rambler!

On the last day of every month, details of the following month's walks will appear on our website, and telephone calls made to walkers without computers on Phil's list. Walks scheduled for March are on Wednesday 10th, Tuesday 16th, Thursday 18th and Wednesday 24th.

## Diversion Orders

Our Association, as a registered user body, receives copies of diversion proposals from county Highway Departments for comment as we feel appropriate. Some years ago we used to notify members of diversion orders confirmed because the Ramblers Association members found this useful, but this practice fell into disuse for lack of resources.

We shall now, however, publish this information on our website, where members can also find on-line links to county Highway Departments.

## Summer Walks 2010

<b>Date / Time</b>	<b>Start &amp; Grid Reference</b>	<b>Walk Leader / Contact No</b>	<b>Date / Time</b>	<b>Start &amp; Grid Reference</b>	<b>Walk Leader / Contact No</b>
Friday 2nd April 2pm	BERDEN Church GR: 468296	Pat Tel: 654050	Monday 5th July 7.15pm	LITTLE HADHAM village hall GR: 436222	Barbara Tel: 842352
Sunday 11th April 10am	MUCH HADHAM "Old Red Lion" GR: 428197	Paul Tel: 501596	Tuesday 13th July 7.15pm	SAWBRIDGEWORTH Bell St car park GR:482148	Sarah Tel: 723829
Sunday 25th April 2pm	TAKELY Church GR: 555216	Tony Tel: 813614	Sunday 18th July 10am	HATFIELD BROAD OAK Church GR: 545166	Brian H Tel: 812574
Tuesday 4th May* 10am	BIRCHANGER WOOD Water Tower GR: 502223	The Warden Tel: 652095	Friday 23rd July 7.15pm	LITTLE HADHAM Church GR: 446227	Pat Tel: 654050
Sunday 9th May 2pm	LITTLE HALLINGBURY Village Car Park GR: 502173	Martin Tel: 831084	Sunday 8th August 2pm	FARNHAM GREEN phone box GR: 468252	Linda Tel: 813424
Saturday 22nd May 2pm	SAWBRIDGEWORTH Bell St car park GR:482148	Brian R Tel: 832753	Sunday 22nd August 10am	HUNSDEN Post Office GR: 416140	Peter Tel: 835036
Tuesday 1st June 7.15pm	GREAT HALLINGBURY Bedlars Green GR: 523202	Heather Tel: 659071	Sunday 5th September 2pm	ELSENHAM Station GR: 532270	Jacki Tel: 817534
Monday 14th June 7.15pm	ALBURY village car park GR: 441248	Marion Tel: 771392	Sunday 19th September 10am	THORLEY Butlers Hall barn GR:466194	Sylvia Tel: 656478
Sunday 20th June 10am	HATFIELD HEATH village car park GR: 524150	Gordon Tel: 325058	Sunday 3rd October 10am	MUCH HADHAM "Old Red Lion" GR: 428197	Sarah Tel: 723829
Thursday 24th June 7.15pm	THORLEY Butlers Hall barn GR:466194	Sylvia Tel: 656478	Sunday 17th October 10am	HATFIELD HEATH village car park GR: 524150	Peter Tel: 835036

\*Following our successful visit last November, the warden has kindly agreed to lead us through the wood when the spring flora should be at it's best.

For further information on each walk, please go to our website:  
**[www.walksaroundstortford.org.uk](http://www.walksaroundstortford.org.uk)**

## Featured Walk



Start: By the Cricketer's Arms, Rickling Green. Map ref: TL511298

Distance: 2 miles

Obstacles: None.

Surface: Roads, tracks, good field edge and woodland paths.

This short walk should appeal to those who want to get out in the fresh air for an hour during the winter. The 301 bus service which runs hourly between Bishop's Stortford and Saffron Walden passes through Quendon so is convenient for non-drivers. There are no obstacles and no thick mud to contend with but obviously footwear suitable for the time of year is required.

Start from the hardstanding on Rickling Green in front of the Cricketer's Arms. With you back to the pub, turn right and follow

far end past the red post box. Soon after turn left into Woodside and follow the bridleway into the wood, straight on past the footpath which immediately goes off to the left, and 50 yards further on take the left fork by the holly tree.

By May this wood will be carpeted with bluebells and the public can enjoy the spectacle from the several footpaths which go through and round the wood.

The path soon emerges from the wood onto a track bordering open countryside. Turn right on the track and follow it past the end of the wood, down a slope and turn right at the bottom where the waymark points up a grassy path. Turn left when you come to the smart cream and white house and then turn right 40 yards further on. This leads you down to the main road where you turn right and after 35 yards cross over to the lane which takes you up to Quendon Parish Church. Take time to admire this beautifully kept little church dedicated to St. Simon and St. Jude. Carry straight on past the church following a bridleway<sup>o</sup> through the bushes, bearing right to come out on to a field. Turn left and then bear right on a grassy path across the field to the corner of a wood.

From this path there are far-reaching views across the upper Cam valley towards Debden, Widdington and Little Henham. The wood ahead is an ancient hazel and hornbeam coppice and the remains of the old wood-banks along the edges are clearly visible. As well as bluebells one may also see oxlips and orchids flowering there in the spring and perhaps catch a glimpse of the deer that frequently visit. You will probably see their tracks in the soft ground at entrances to the wood.

On reaching the corner of the wood, turn right and follow the edge of the wood to the far end of the field and round to the brown board fence. The path turns left into the wood here and then turns right. Follow the path through and out of the wood to the main road. Turn right and after a few yards cross over to a tarmacked path by the first house. This path will take you through to Rickling Green where you turn left to go back to the pub.



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 8 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 is due to be published this year, and Walks of the Month are offered on our new website.

We lead midweek daytime walks of 2-4 miles and also summer evening and weekend walks of 5-7 miles. Details are found in 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: Membership Secretary, c/o 6 Hawthorn Rise, Thorley Street, Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM23 4AW. Would members please note that we will need this year to increase the annual subscription for family membership to £2 to meet increased postage and new website related costs. This will be proposed at the AGM.

I enclose a cheque for £..... being my/our subscription for 2009/2010 (made payable to Bishop's Stortford & District Footpaths Association)

**Name: (BLOCK LETTERS)** .....

**Address:** .....  
.....  
.....

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