



Bishop's Stortford & District Footpath Association

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



Chairman:

Dave Webber

Vice Chairman:

Phil Tripp

**Membership
Secretary
& Treasurer:**

Christine Ross

**Footpath
Secretary:**

Paul Elliot

**Website
Manager:**

Brian Hayes

**Newsletter
Editor:**

Peter Hales

**Association
Address:**

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

Note from the Chairman:

A very warm welcome to the Spring edition of the BSDFA newsletter. It's been a long cold Winter with the thermometer dropping to record lows in December. The good news is that longer and hopefully warmer days are fast approaching enabling us to take full advantage of the wonderful walking opportunities on our doorstep.

For over 50 years your Association has been at the forefront of protecting public access in and around Bishop's Stortford and those committee members with long local connections tell me that the our footpath network is probably in better shape than its ever been. This has been helped by initiatives encouraging farmers to maintain rights of way on their land, more proactive involvement from local authorities and of course the continued vigilance from your Association and other like minded organisations. Unfortunately all this good work could be put in jeopardy if those departments responsible for maintaining our rights of way are seen as easy targets for local authority cuts. What the impact will be locally is not yet clear but you can rest assured that your Association will be monitoring the situation very closely.

One of the best ways of keeping our paths open is to

walk them regularly. Why not join one of the many organised walks that we have scheduled throughout the summer months? Full details are included in this newsletter and are also available on our new revamped website (more about this later). The guided walks are also a great way of discovering some hidden corners of our patch.

In order for us to continue our activities it is essential for us to have the support of a diverse and enthusiastic committee. This is something that we have benefited from for many years but of late our numbers have fallen and we are in need of new members to maintain the vitality of the Association. If you are interested please contact the Secretary or speak to one of the committee at the AGM.

We are hoping to attend the summer fetes at Standon (Monday 2nd May) and Hatfield Heath (Sunday 19th June). We look forward to meeting current members and will hopefully attract some new ones as well. Look out for our new banner and please drop in for a chat.

Thank you for your continued support. Happy walking.

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

Notification of AGM

The **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** will be held on: **Wednesday 6th April 2011 at 7.45 pm**

in the Day Centre, Apton Road, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 3SN. Parking is available in Apton Road car park nearby. At the conclusion of official business there will be a break for refreshments followed by a talk.

AGENDA

- 1. Minutes of the AGM held on 16th March 2010**
- 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. Reappointment of Independent Examiner**
- 8. Questions from Members and Discussion**

BREAK FOR REFRESHMENTS

- 9. A slide illustrated talk: "THE STORT STORY" by Richard Thomas**

The thirteen and three quarter winding miles of the Stort navigation are generally acknowledged to be among the prettiest in England. This talk looks at the history of the river and follows its story from 1766 up to the modern day. We travel the whole waterway from the head of navigation at Bishop's Stortford to the Lee Navigation at Hoddesdon. The talk will last an hour.

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 is due to be 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: 6 Hawthorn Rise, Thorley Street, Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM23 4AW.

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

I enclose a cheque for £..... being my/our subscription for 2011 (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

Website Update:

Our website has been available for more than a year now. It has regularly been accessed by many people, resulting in us seeing some new faces on walks and welcoming new members to the Association. However the committee felt that the website needed updating in order to make the most of software upgrades and to refresh the "look" of the site. Unfortunately this was not possible with the company who originally setup the website and the committee sought a new partner. We are now in the final stages of setting up the new site with BrightCherry, which will be available from March 2011. The website address will remain the same: www.walksaroundstortford.org.uk

One feature of the new homepage is a gallery of photographs that changes regularly and is something that will allow us to show the countryside around Bishop's Stortford. We would like your help to make this feature as interesting as possible. Please could you send us any digital photos that you would like to see on the website. The photos need to be in "landscape" orientation and at least 337 pixels high by 950 pixels wide. This equates to a print size of roughly 4 x 6 inches.

We look forward to receiving your photos and any comments you have on the new website.

Birchanger Wood: An Update

Two years on and Pat Forrest, warden of Birchanger Wood, has achieved milestones along the way towards his dream of securing the future survival of his beloved woodland. His talk at our 2009 AGM and guided tour in the following Autumn captured our interest, and we congratulate him on the splendid outcome resulting from all the unstinting work he and his tireless fund-raising supporters have done since then.

An all weather path (see below), suitable for disabled users, has been constructed in the wood to enable access without



the damage to ground vegetation caused by walkers diverting to avoid mud and flooding. While this work has been carried out by contractors, thanks to grants from various public bodies and other groups, most of the work of maintaining the wood, including coppicing, is done by volunteers. The Woodland Paths Day, launched earlier this year by the Birchanger Wood Trust, was opened by television gardening enthusiast Christine Walkern. It was a very happy and successful occasion attended by more than one hundred people. Association member, Sylvia Macdonald, has commented: "We marvelled at the section of pathway already laid down as part of the network plan, designed to protect carpets of bluebells and other woodland flowers from the brutality of unheeding feet, and inviting those needing wheelchairs to enjoy woodland sights and sounds on the edge of town."

But the 'new horizon' envisaged two years ago by Pat is sadly, in today's austere world, politically and economically cloudy. Whilst substantial grants and support from the Forestry Commission have made this initial progress possible, funding has dried up, and some twenty percent of the work needed to complete the plans for Birchanger woodland conservation remains to be done. If anyone would like to become a volunteer or would like to make a donation to the Trust, please contact Pat Forrest (telephone number 01279 652095) or go to their website for more details: www.birchangerwoodtrust.org.

Footpath Problems:

(Update by Paul Elliot)

The Association is aware that Public Rights of Way (PRoW) maintenance is low on the list of priorities following the recent government and local council spending reviews and cut backs. Walkers willing to report footpath problems will help put pressure on the appropriate County Council PRoW offices. Despite the cut backs, the Association can report one recent small success: the repair (replacement) of a stile at the junction of FP19 and Church Road in Great Hallingbury.

In the last Newsletter we highlighted a Mineral and Waste Extraction development at Crumps Farm, Little Canfield. The Mineral extraction development is there for the long term with increased heavy goods vehicle (HGV) movements at a time when The Flitch Way is likely to experience increased usage due to housing developments in the area. The Association's safety concerns revolve around the lack of visibility due to vegetation at the corners of the crossing, which is considered to be a particular problem during the summer months when the vegetation is in full leaf. We felt that children cycling well ahead of their parents were at particular risk.

The Association wrote to Essex County Council expressing concerns. We suggested an automated traffic light system and / or the vegetation to be cut back and managed as well as more warning signs to be placed further back from the junction. Safety also relies on HGV drivers adhering to the 5mph limit! Essex County Council responded in January stating that a traffic light system would not be appropriate in a rural area, but they would talk to Country Parks Officers and the Site operator to see if additional notices further back from the crossing could be installed on the Flitch Way to give a longer period of notice. Additionally, the Association were told that management of the vegetation was in hand.

(Source doc. Essex County Council Ref: DM/CT/70/421/89)



Essex County Council have recently invited comment on a Planning Application by Cemex (UK) to restore agricultural land at Frogs Hall Farm near Bambers Green, Takeley. The applicant seeks to amend the restoration of a previous borrow pit (approved in association with the construction of the new A120 dual carriageway). The original restoration was split into two parts as follows: A conservation area to the south of the A120 and Agricultural land to the north of the A120

Both parts are doing well, with the exception of a small area of agricultural land to the west of the River Roding which also marks the parish boundary. This is a low point in the agricultural land and a seasonal wetland has been formed to the detriment of crops which have failed.

Additionally, Takeley Bridleway BW29 which crosses the affected area is under water, rendering it unfit for purpose (see above). The plan is to transfer some deposits from a high point to the affected low point, known as re-profiling during the summer of 2011. This work depends on the soil being sufficiently dry and friable. During the work, the bridleway will be closed for 2-3 weeks. The Association supports the application and has responded accordingly. (Source doc. Essex County Council Ref: DM/MW/ESS/06/11/UTT)

Some other problems we have reported:

The virtual obliteration of a footpath in Great Hallingbury (FP18), adjacent to the Jenkins Lane sewage works. The footpath is lost in a field of nettles.

The collapse of the re-inforced banking on the River Cam on Henham Public Byway 33 (see right).



Access to the Flitch Way:

The Flitch way is a long distance bridleway along the track of the disused railway which ran from Bishop's Stortford to Braintree. The bridleway (open to walkers, cyclists and horse riders) extends from Braintree to a point about one mile from Bishop's Stortford, where the trackbed of the old railway was removed when the groundwork for the M11 motorway was carried out.

Members of our Association have expressed a wish for a direct footpath access to the Flitch Way from Bishop's Stortford, avoiding walking along the B1250 road and negotiating the motorway junction.

We are trying to organise a joint approach, by all the local footpath users organisations and Bishop's Stortford Town Council, to Essex County Council to urge the creation of a short length of footpath to link Bishop's Stortford footpath number 47 (across the golf course) and Great Hallingbury footpath number 3 to the Flitch Way.

Update on Unlawful obstructions in Bishop's Stortford

Maze Green Road verge obstructions: This matter is continuing to be pursued by Association members Michael Hurford and Sylvia McDonald. While Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has now put a county policy in place with respect to unlawful verge obstruction, there is still no agreement on how the policy is to be implemented in the case of Maze Green Road, nor on how planning procedural measures could ensure avoidance of unlawful verge obstruction in the future. (see below)



Dane O'Coys Road gate obstruction: Correspondence is also ongoing with the county legal department regarding its responsibility under Sections 130(1) and (5) on the matter of removal of the gate and private road signing installed one at each end of Dane O'Coys Road and denying ease of access, thereby constituting a breach of the Highways Act.

It is hoped to report at the AGM that good progress is being made on both matters.

The Hertfordshire Way, Thorley section:

(Update by Sylvia McDonald)

Last year Sylvia wrote to assure members that Thorley parish council would stay vigilant and fight to keep this footpath safe from the violation that would come from district council approval of applications to move and build two secondary schools on a shared green belt site in Thorley. Our Association too was right to remain vigilant and stay ready for fight because the plans were re-submitted last autumn. Massive opposition was met from associations (including OSS), councils and individuals, and the applications were refused, but an appeal by the applicants is expected imminently, within weeks. HCC supports the appeal regardless of weighty opposing argument, adamant that the educational case justifiably overrides all resulting harm. Unquestionably, therefore, the Hertfordshire Way footpath in Thorley remains under continuing threat, and this Association will continue to oppose the planning applications.

Countryside Management Service Guided Walks

The Countryside Management Service have organised two guided walks in the Bishop's Stortford area. The first will be discovering the history and wildlife of the area around Grange Paddocks and the second will be a walk around Southern Country Park, learning about the exciting wetland management works planned for the site

Wednesday 30th March 2011 (10am - 12:30pm):

2.3 miles/3.7 km. Easy

Meet at Grange Paddocks car park, Rye Street, Bishops Stortford. Grid ref: TL 489 222

For more information, contact: CMS Northeastern Area 01462 459395

Wednesday 6th April 2011 (10am - 12:00am):

1.4 miles/2.3 km. Easy

Meet at Southern Country Park car park on Thorley Lane (East) opposite Thorley cricket ground, Bishops Stortford. Grid ref: TL 477 193

For more information, contact: CMS Northeastern Area 01462 459395

Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE)

Despite the news that the the application to build a second runway has been withdrawn, the SSE are still organising fundraising events. There will be a "Runway Ramble" on Saturday 25th June between 10am and 6pm. The walk starts at the Three Horseshoes, Duton Hill and is a circular walk of about 4 miles. There will be refreshments available at the pub. For more information, contact: SSE Campaign Office on:

01279 870558 or info@stopstanstedexpansion.com

Other fundraising events are advertised on the SSE website: www.stopstanstedexpansion.com

Summer Walks 2011

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 3rd April 10am	THORLEY Butlers Hall GR: 466194	Sylvia 01279 656478
Friday 22nd April * 2.15pm	NEWPORT station GR: 521336	Pat 01279 654050
Sunday 8th May * 10am	GRAVESEND The Catherine Wheel pub GR: 439257	Peter 01279 835036
Tuesday 17th May 7.15pm	BEDLARS GREEN GR: 523202	Heather 01279 659071
Thursday 26th May 7.15pm	BENTFIELD GREEN Rose & Crown pub GR: 507255	Tony 01279 813614
Sunday 5th June 10am	HATFIELD FOREST Visitor Centre** GR: 540198	Dave 01279 832632
Friday 10th June 7.15pm	MUCH HADHAM Old Red Lion GR: 428197	Barbara 01279 842352
Monday 20th June 7.15pm	ALBURY Village Hall GR: 441248	Marion 01279 771392
Sunday 3rd July 10am	SAWBRIDGEWORTH Pishobury Park GR: 475139	Sarah 01279 723829
Thursday 14th July* 7.15pm	BENTFIELD GREEN Rose & Crown pub GR: 507255	Brian 01279 812574
Wednesday 20th July* 7.15pm	MANUDEN School GR: 491265	Pat 01279 654050
Sunday 7th August 10am	ALBURY Village Hall GR: 441248	Martin 01279 831084
Sunday 21st August * 10am	EASTWICK War Memorial GR: 434117	Peter 01279 835036
Sunday 4th September 10am	UGLEY Village Hall GR: 514272	Paul E 01279 501596
Saturday 17th September 2pm	BENTFIELD GREEN Village pond GR: 505254	Linda 01279 813424
Sunday 2nd October 10am	MUCH HADHAM Old Red Lion GR: 428197	Paul E 01279 501596
Sunday 16th October* 10am	BISHOP'S STORTFORD Twyford Lock GR: 494193	Paul A 01279 656199

The weekend walks are generally 5 - 6 miles long and normally last between 2 and 2 ½ hours. Evening walks are shorter (approx 4 miles) and are normally no longer than 2 hours.

*Joint walk with the Uttlesford Ramblers.

Bold Italics Denotes evening walk.

** Car park charges (£4.80) will apply if not a National Trust member displaying badge.