



Bishop's Stortford & District Footpath Association

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



NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2011

Chairman:

Dave Webber

Vice Chairman:

Phil Tripp

**Membership
Secretary
& Treasurer:**

Christine Ross

**Footpath
Secretary:**

Paul Elliot

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Manager:**

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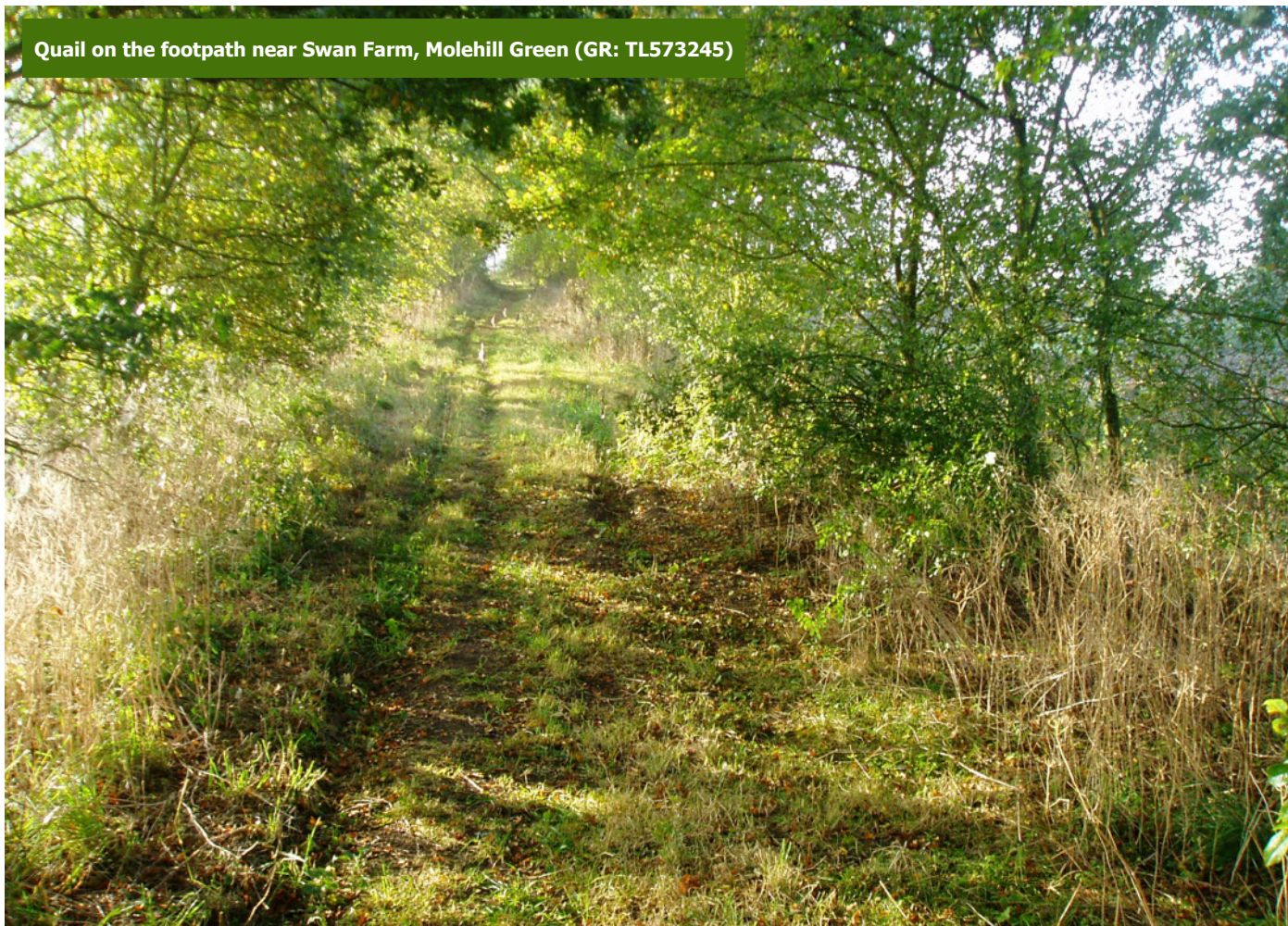
Peter Hales

**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

Quail on the footpath near Swan Farm, Molehill Green (GR: TL573245)



2011 AGM: Report

The 2011 AGM took place on the evening of Wednesday 6th April at the Apton Road Community Centre.

The Chairman, Dave Webber, reported that the Association has redesigned the website making it easier to use. Members were encouraged to send in photos for display on the website. He also announced that Pat Field would be standing down after 25 years on the Committee. Pat has been responsible for arranging the walks programme and was thanked for all that he had done for the Association.

The need for new Committee members was emphasised and interested members were encouraged to join.

The Treasurer, Christine Ross, reported an excess of expenditure over income of just over £600 – due mainly to website costs and a drop in walking book sales. The closing of Boardmans has reduced the availability of the most recent book. Our next book will contain a barcode, something that will increase our outlet options.

The Footpaths Secretary, Paul Elliot, discussed the impact of the expected budget cuts on our local footpaths and highlighted some of the known footpath issues.

The Chairman and Treasurer/Secretary were re-elected and seven committee members were also re-elected. The accounts of the Association were accepted subject to audit.

Following a short break for refreshments, Mr Richard Thomas gave an illustrated talk entitled 'The Stort Story'. This was a very interesting talk on the history of the River Stort Navigation.

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 2011/12 (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

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Note from the Chairman

I hope that you have all had a wonderful summer despite the mixed weather. I was lucky enough to plan walking trips in late April and mid October and hit the jackpot on both occasions. Last weekend was the latest leg of my leisurely stroll around England's coast with a superb three day walk from Poole Harbour to Weymouth. That's 42 miles of the South West Coast Path ticked off and only 588 miles to go! With the shorter days approaching I'll be doing more walking closer to home and I hope you can join me and the other leaders on one of our organised local walks. If you've not been on one before then please give them a try – they are not generally longer than 5 to 6 miles and give you an ideal opportunity to explore the local area. Details of our programme are in the newsletter with a more detailed description available on our website.

One of the highlights of the summer was meeting some of you when you visited our stand at the Hatfield Heath fete in June. We met a few old friends and managed to recruit a good number of new members. The feedback we received was very positive and it's great to know that our work in helping to promote and preserve the rights of way network in and around Bishop's Stortford is appreciated. The bad news is that this is becoming more challenging as your committee grows smaller and some of our long servers look to pass the baton on to a new team. Yes you've guessed it - I'm appealing for volunteers to come forward to serve on the committee. Please give this some consideration and if you think that you could spare us a little of your time we would be delighted to hear from you.



We are slowly building up a list of members who receive their newsletter by e-mail rather than through the post. As a small charity this is a tremendous help as the costs of producing over 400 paper newsletters and sending them out twice yearly by second class post is almost £500 per annum. To switch to electronic copy please email contact@walksaroundstortford.org.uk giving your name and address.

Thank you for your continued support. If you have news or information that you would like to share with us, or have any ideas about content for this newsletter, please let us know at the above address. Happy walking.

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

Reminder:

Have you paid your subscription for this year?

If not, please fill in and post the form on page 2.

Footpath Problems

(Update by Paul Elliot)

Henham Public Byway 33: Update

Henham Public Byway 33, which runs adjacent to the infant River Cam north of Henham village, was repaired earlier this year. As reported in the Spring 2011 issue, the byway banking had collapsed. It is thought that the damage was caused by motorised vehicles and a traffic regulation order was being considered by Essex County Council. Before and After photographs are below.



Modification Order to the Public Rights of Way network in Widford:

A Modification Order to the Public Rights of Way network in Widford has been proposed affecting the Restricted Byway network in the vicinity of the Sewage Works and the River Ash - subject to representations and comments which were to be received no later than 29 August 2011. Footpaths 18 (Widford) and 13,18,26 (Wareside) are affected. The Association has no objection to the proposal.

Old River Lane/ Causeway development plans

Bishop's Stortford local news has recently reported a controversial proposed development by Hendersons Global Investors. The Old River Lane/ Causeway development has generated some heated debates. The application (3/10/1964/OP) was granted Outline Planning permission in controversial circumstances by East Herts District Council Development Control Committee. The vote was won by a margin of 6 votes to 5.

The proposal, if it goes through, will dramatically change the face of the Causeway area. There are two sites as follows:

The Main Site to the west of the Link Road;

The proposed Flood Compensation Area (FCA) to the north of the Link Road and to the west of the River Stort.

The purpose of the FCA is to mitigate the effects of two storeys of underground parking on the Main Site close to the River Stort. The Association commented on the proposals for the proposed FCA with regard to the effect on the footpaths within the FCA which are of major concern. The FCA falls within an area of the town known as the 'Meads'.

The trees and vegetation within the FCA will be cut down and the area re-profiled with the existing level being lowered and the trees and vegetation replaced with 'high quality grassland'. This is unlikely to support wildlife and biodiversity as much as the status quo.

It is not clear at this stage as to the future of these footpaths within the FCA. The footpaths are not registered as Public Rights of Way. The Association is working towards convincing Hertfordshire County Council that these footpaths should be registered as Public Rights of Way (PRoW).

The Hertfordshire Way, Thorley Section:

As reported in the Spring issue, an appeal against East Herts District Council's (EHDC) refusal to grant planning permission for two secondary schools to be built on Green Belt land to the south of Whittington Way was expected to take place. The building of these two schools would have a ruinous effect on the Thorley Section of the Hertfordshire Way.

Sure enough, despite overwhelming opposition to their proposals by individuals, the Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation, CPRE Hertfordshire and others, the applicants decided to launch an appeal on the basis that their so-called educational need outweighed the harm that this would have on the Green Belt. Their benefit overrides your loss.

The building of the schools was to be financed by yet more housing on sites in Bishop's Stortford. Furthermore, building on the proposed site would make it very difficult to defend against more development further to the south nearer the bypass, resulting in yet more infilling.

As the newsletter goes to print, the Public Inquiry being conducted was due to finish and the Inspector was due to make his recommendations to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in the New Year.

The decision is being closely monitored by local authorities, because a precedent may be set which could open the floodgates to similar appeals.

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.

Planning Laws

The current planning system has been in existence for 64 years. The Government plans to replace this existing national planning policy with a new National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF), a draft of which was published for consultation in July. There have been many objections to these proposals from organisations including the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), the National Trust, the Friends of the Earth, the RSPB, the British Wildlife Trust and the Daily Telegraph, who have started a "Hands Off Our Land" campaign. The Essex branch of CPRE say that the new proposals "seem to invite inappropriate housing development on the green fields of Essex".

The main criticisms of the NPPF are:

1: It is underpinned by a presumption in favour of "sustainable" development. We fear this amounts to a presumption in favour of any development.

2: By removing the presumption against inappropriate development, it weakens the protection of Green Belt, which accounts for about 40% of our Essex countryside.

3: It does not recognise the importance of, and offers no protection for, our cherished and valued "ordinary" Essex countryside, which accounts for most of the remaining 60%.

4: It views the planning system solely as a vehicle for enabling economic growth through development, without regard to the social and environmental consequences.

5: It removes the current policy of ensuring previously developed land is used to meet development needs before greenfield sites.

6: It requires local authorities to identify a five year supply of developable land for new housing with an additional allowance of 20%. This is a central government directive at odds with our understanding of localism.

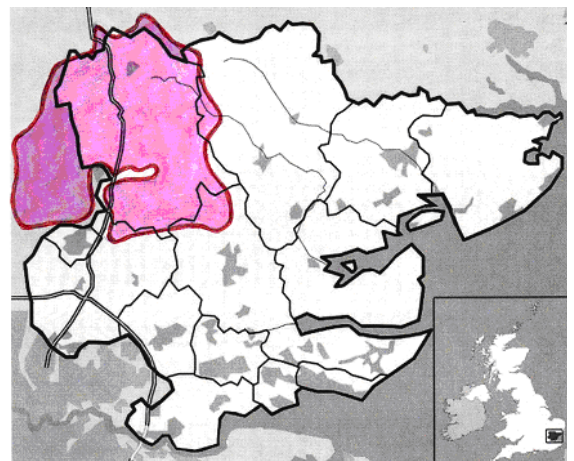
The consultation period ended on 17th October.

The Hundred Parishes



This is a logo that may become very familiar to us all soon. The Hundred Parishes is a concept that has been put forward by the Essex branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). It is an area of approximately 350 square miles enclosed by the old Icknield Way in the North, Ermine Street to the West, the country around Finchingfield and Great Waltham to the East and Sawbridgeworth and Matching in the South.

David Heathcote, of the Essex CPRE, says that the area should be protected because it represents an England that was ordinary but is now special. Special because every inch expresses the disappearing link between man and nature through agriculture in an inseparable ecology of farms, villages and market towns set in a landscape of fields, hedges, woods, ponds, streams, and lanes settled for at least 2000 years. The area has over 6000 listed buildings in about 350 square miles of land linked by over 1000 miles of public paths and lanes. Between these lie field systems, woods and ponds that still show their origins in the Roman period or later Saxon clearings of forest in this remote part of the old Kingdom of Essex. Throughout the Hundred Parishes there is a richness of flora and fauna that has been estimated to be about 25% more diverse than in the National Parks of the North and is becoming richer by the year as evidenced by the return of Otters and Kites to the area.



The CPRE campaign has the support of Essex County Council and Uttlesford District Council and has the aim of making The Hundred Parishes as recognisable to the public as the Chilterns or Cotswolds. The CPRE is organising a public awareness campaign based on publicising circular walks from railway stations in the area.

Their website is: www.essexinfo.net/thehundredparishes. This contains more information about progress so far. Or you can e-mail: office@cpressex.org.uk.

A 3 mile walk from Little Hadham

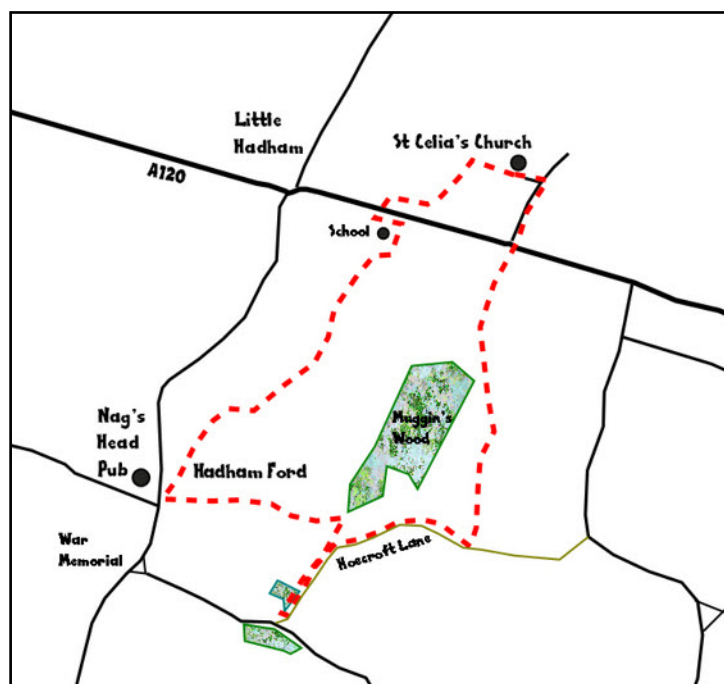
This is a short walk full of interest and surprises with changing scenery, wildlife, ancient buildings and a pub halfway round.

Start: St. Cecilia's Church, Little Hadham.

OS Map ref: TL446227.

Distance: 3 miles.

Surface: Mostly well-maintained grassy paths. The section along the byway can get muddy in winter.



Starting from the church porch take the tarmac path up the slope and turn right along Church Lane. Cross over the A120 main road to the track opposite and follow this straight ahead towards a wood from where it winds up to the top of the rise. Go up a bank through the hedge and carry straight on along the edge of the polo field to the far end where you pass through another hedge onto a track which is a byway named Hoecroft Lane.

Turn right and follow this shady lane for about 600 yards. At the bottom of a slope a stile will be visible through a gap in the hedge on the right. Although that will be the route which you will be taking, you are encouraged to ignore the gap and proceed up the lane for about 100 yards to a waymark post where you go through the hedge on the right and turn back down the other side of the hedge. This point offers a fine view across the valley towards Albury church on the horizon. Go over the stile previously mentioned and bear right down across the field. On reaching the hedge turn left and follow the path all the way downhill until it reaches the ford and footbridge opposite the Nag's Head.

If you are taking a break at the pub it is worth strolling along to the war memorial 100 yards to the south to admire houses and gardens.

From the field side of the ford and facing the pub, take the path to the right signposted to Little Hadham school. The path rises gently to a metal gate at the corner of the wood and then follows the wood round. At the top of the rise the path turns left and continues in a straight line to the back of the school where it turns right and then left to come out to the main road.

Turn left on the footpath down past the school until you see a footpath signpost on the bank on the other side of the road. Cross over to this and follow the grassy path along the bank back up the hill. The path will go round an old gravel pit and soon reach a waymark post which shows the direction of the path across the field towards the bottom of the churchyard. If the cross-field path is impassable turn right here and go through the hedge on to the top of the grass bank above the main road and follow it up to the entrance to Church Lane and back to the church. Take time to admire the setting of the church, see the ancient yew and cherry tree in the churchyard, and look for the piece of Hertfordshire pudding stone set in the north side of the tower.

This and other walks are available on the "Featured Walks" section on the website.

Winter Walks 2011/12

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 *	Molehill Green Three Horseshoes pub GR: 564247	Brian 01279 812574
Sunday 20th November 10am	Bedlars Green Sir John Houlblon pub GR: 523203	Heather 01279 659071
Sunday 4th December 10am	Bishop's Stortford Apton Road car park GR: 486212	John 07799 804429
Sunday 18th December 10am	Green Tye Prince of Wales pub GR: 444184	Dave 01279 832632 0792 025 4825
Monday 26th December 10am	Sawbridgeworth Pishiobury Park GR: 476139	Sarah 01279 723829 0741 141 1104
Sunday 8th January 10am	Wareside White Horse pub GR: 395155	Peter 01279 835036 0794 143 5001
Sunday 22nd January 10am	Hatfield Heath Village car park GR: 524150	Peter 01279 835036 0794 143 5001
Sunday 5th February 10am	Bentfield End GR: 506254	Linda 01279 813424
Sunday 19th February 10am	Little Hallingbury Village carpark GR: 502173	Paul 01279 501596
Sunday 4th March 10am	Gaston Green Little Hallingbury Mill GR: 496169	Sarah 01279 723829 0741 141 1104
If you wish to eat after the walk, please contact the Mill on 01279 726554 to make a reservation		
Sunday 18th March 10am	Albury Village Hall GR: 442248	Tony 01279 813614

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

*Joint walk with the Uttlesford Ramblers.