

## LONG STRATTON FOOTPATH WARDEN'S REPORT JUNE 2021

I had hoped by going round at the end of May I would be ahead, or at least abreast, of the spring growth, but of course everywhere was burgeoning and I had my work cut to trim back to keep some paths passable. Even though paths are still being used more than they were, it takes quite a bit of footfall to keep fast-growing grass and weeds down. I was fortunate that I had the kind assistance of my partner, Roy Woodhouse, and would like to thank him. All inspections took place at the end of May/beginning of June.

FP1 (Hempnall Rd to A140) No change

FP2 North from Hempnall Rd. Growth round stile had reached 18 inches which I cleared with shears. So far the gate has always allowed access so in a way no need to clear the stile - but you don't know what might happen in the future. The landowner was told to repair the stile or guarantee access by gate and he repaired the stile... Rest of the path to bridge OK.

FP3 (between Church Lane and Hempnall Rd) The path at the Church Road end is still one big puddle even after a week of high temperatures but there is enough room to get past. The rest of the path is now not too bad

FP 4 (east from FP3) This path is nice and grassy leading over plank bridge to replaced field path to Morningthorpe. The plank bridge was passable but I gave it a good pre-emptive trim as brambles can grow several feet remarkably quickly.

FP5 (A short length between Church Lane and Norwich Road cutting off the corner). Now very overgrown, especially in the middle section – I had to walk at the edge of the crop. Too much to clear without mechanical assistance but walkers can easily go round on the road, which is not busy.

FP6 (from FP7 to St Michael's Church). I'm afraid the stile from FP7 into the field towards the church is turning into quite a saga. After I reported in March that the stile had been mended and was now a little easier to use, it began to lean again and I had a report from an able-bodied parishioner going to the Easter Service that she was afraid to use it. I reported this difficult stile to Highways again and it has now been tweaked again. The additional upright and horizontal bar have been removed (together with my direction roundels, I may add) and some work done on the main stile. Unfortunately, the materials used were not man enough for the job and the cross-piece is nailed to a rather thin piece of wood that has split, so the crosspiece is terribly wobbly and scary to cross. There are also barbs on the wire. I am at my wits end here. Do I report it yet again (with more months of waiting) or does anyone on the council know the landowner?

FP7 (Churchfields estate to Rhees Green) . A well-used path round the field edge and there is a good rolled path where it crosses the field to the edge of the estate. I trimmed back the overhanging brambles which were not a problem but soon would be.

FP8 (A140 towards Picton Rd) Good grass path; trimmed hedge, nettles, etc, at both plank bridges

FP12 Tarmac between A140 and St Michael's Rd past car park.

FP13 (From Edge's Lane to Rhees Green) This path is so well used that a wide path exists from one end to the other. Unfortunately, the track is about 1 metre to the right of the true track and the farmer has belatedly (5 June) drawn the true track in yellow spray paint. I'm afraid this will mean he'll end up with two paths but it is not the walkers' fault. The finger post at Rhees Green end has been replaced.

FP14 (Rhees Green eastwards towards Morningthorpe) Good field edge path to plank bridge. I have given the vegetation surrounding the bridge a good trim.

FP15 (Star Lane to Hall Rd) Always well-used path. A short distance from the end of Star Lane, a long branch of a hawthorn had nearly reached the ground. I could see that there was a partial break high up where the branch joined the trunk and alerted the town clerk as I felt this could be addressed locally. Otherwise the path was in good condition although I think many people don't realise the path is straight on before going diagonally left. The finger post at Hall Road had rotted in ground level and was lying in the grass. I have leant it upright and reported to Highways.

FP16 (from FP15 to Mill Rd) Good field edge path. However, although I reported my concern about the awkward stile, I have had no response from the Highways department. In my opinion it is getting worse as it is developing a lean, making it even more awkward and there is barbed wire very close. I have taken a picture and re-sent my concerns to Highways.

FP17 (from Mill Lane going east) Good grass path along field edge, then rolled path through crop. However, as I reported, the path is only a metre wide and the crop is rape which is already getting tall and beginning to lean inwards. This section will soon be quite difficult.

FP18 (right turn from FP17 to Mill Road) I was shocked to see this path that I had been so pleased with. Tall grass and weeds obliterated the start and the direction marker. It took some hard work to clear all this but fortunately it was only the first couple of metres that were so badly affected and the rest of the path was still reasonably walkable. I then spent more time clearing the growth round the stile and again at the stile at Mill Road. The plank bridge, put in the schedule in June 2019 has STILL not been replaced; its condition is worsening – the top is very spongy.

FP19 This path is now very good and easy to walk. The wonky fingerpost I mentioned in my last report fell into the ditch. I reported this and it had since been re-instated. It seems to be easy to resolve signpost issues but faulty stiles and barriers are harder to put right.

FP20 (A140 opp. Parker's Lane to Haynton Lane) Good field edge path. The last part to the A140 is badly rutted after the bad weather but I noticed a few heaps of soil so maybe there are plans to even the ground.

FP21 (Parker's Lane to Wood Green) Path marked by white posts. Section to Wood Green now much easier due to use.

FP22 (Mill Rd to RB23 at Wood Green) Ploughed field; temporary footpath replaced along its length by tyre marks. The uprooted finger post is still happily held up by the hedgerow where I balanced it. I have not followed up again as it is doing its job quite well. I'll just monitor it.

RB23 (Wood Green to Mill Road past Mayfields Farm). Good path

FP24 (Wood Green to Morningthorpe). The most remarkable thing has happened here. Someone, whether Council or Farmer has mowed a lovely two-metre wide path along the field edge. Usually, it is overgrown to the point of impassability. I had considered asking for a waymarker where the path leaves the edge and crosses the field but was advised that if that it could be counter-productive. The true path zigzags following the old pattern of smaller fields but the farmer sensibly puts in a straight path. If one waymarker was put in, all would have to be, which would be upsetting for all concerned. I am not sure why all would HAVE to be but, there, I'm a mere voluntary warden. And most of the year the path is pretty obvious, as it is now.

FP25 (part of Boudicca's Way from Parker's Lane through Tyrrel's Wood). There are still many sections of this path which are virtually impassable due to deep mud. Have trimmed back brambles here and there and at the exit at the far end

FP 26 (Parker's Lane winding through nearly to A140) This is pretty hard work. The field edge from Parker's Lane is a nightmare and I got very stung. The section is far too long to improve without mechanical assistance. Neither is it easy to find your way through the next section. I think a waymarker must have disappeared as I don't recall this problem before

FP27 This path is in 3 sections. The field edge grassy path from Hayton's Lane is really overgrown and there is no path through the crop in second section to plank bridge. The third section to A140 is marked by tramlines and the crop is still small so quite easy to use.

### ACTIONS TAKEN

Status of defects reported to Highways 2020

1. FP18 plank bridge work agreed but STILL in queue
2. FP24 Finger post missing at Anson Road end, Morningthorpe) work agreed, not yet carried out.

Defects reported 2021

1. Stile halfway along FP16: Handrail has been removed; other problem as detailed at FP16
2. Waymarker needed half way along FP24 where path leaves field edge> Not pursued
3. No path on FP 27. Still no path. Reported again June 2
4. Fingerpost damaged at Hall Road end of FP 15

Defects put right: fingerpost re-installed at FP19

Bonnie Wade

Long Stratton Footpath Warden

June 2021