

LONG STRATTON FOOTPATH WARDEN'S REPORT SEPTEMBER 2024

The construction of our long-awaited by-pass has, of course, caused temporary problems for both road and footpath users. However, I appreciate the efforts to keep at least a couple of the most frequently used footpaths from the Churchfields area open. This involves a fenced-off line which crosses the works area with access gates guarded by a worker who opens the gate on your approach (assuming no digger is heading straight for you).

I have recently inspected all our paths, carrying out routine care work with my secateurs where necessary – brambles grow so inordinately fast – and reporting any problems to Highways.

NB There is one problem I think we can deal with ourselves, and much more quickly. On FP 18 where our lovely new plank bridge that parish intervention made possible, the safety chicken wire is unravelling and bunching at one end. This is quite dangerous if anyone should catch their foot and be sent hurtling into the ditch and can easily be fixed by someone with an industrial-type stapler such as I'm sure our resourceful handyman has access to.

FP1 (Hempnall Rd to A140) The footpath that doesn't go anywhere anyone would want to go.

FP2 (North from Hempnall Rd) This path heads north before swinging round on grass to the right to cross a small bridge into the parish of Morningthorpe. My remarks from February still stand with the additional info that the gate has been taken off its hinges and leans against the hedge guarded by tall nettles...

FP3 (between Church Lane and Hempnall Rd) There appears to have been further levelling-work at the Hempnall Road end which is now quite good but the Church Rd end is still marred by an enormous pool of water that never dries; however, you can get round it to the left so not impassible. I shall continue to monitor (especially after heavy rain).

FP 4 (east from FP3) Grassy path leading over plank bridge to field path to Morningthorpe. All OK

FP5 (A short length between Church Lane and Norwich Road cutting off the corner). In good condition, but Fingerpost knocked askew, probably by a hedge-cutter or mower

FP6 (from FP7 to St Michael's Church. Now out of bounds.

FP7 (Churchfields estate to Rhees Green near junction with Church Lane) Mostly out of bounds although walkers make their own way from the estate along the field edge to Edges Lane and join the gated FP13. I notice the Fingerpost at Churchfields has disappeared.

FP8 (A140 towards Picton Rd) Good grass path.

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

FP13 (From Edge's Lane to Rhees Green) One of the gated footpaths.

FP14 (Rhees Green eastwards towards Morningthorpe) . Good field edge path.

FP15 (Star Lane to Hall Rd) The other gated path.

FP16 (from FP15 to Mill Rd) You can still walk across the field to the stile where a notice tells you to use FP7! More useful at Mill Rd I would have thought. Beyond this is out of bounds. I notice the stile has not been improved as requested by the Highways Officer- but I'll take this up nearer the time of the by-pass completion.

FP17 (from Mill Lane going east) Good path. The fingerpost has been replaced.

FP18 (right turn from FP17 to Mill Rd) Nice walking long grassy field edge path, then our new footbridge. The chicken wire has become loose and tangled at one end. Please see preamble in bold. The stile beyond has continued to deteriorate and I will now report it

FP19 (Hall Rd to Wood Green. Clear path marked out.

FP20 (A140 opp. Parker's Lane to Haynton's Lane). Excellent wide path, well used. The fingerpost at the A140 end that was leaning has now disappeared.

FP21 (Parker's Lane to Wood Green) Out of bounds except for the field at Wood Green end.

FP22 (Mill Rd to RB23 at Wood Green) The fingerpost is still reclining in the hedge which has grown so abundant you can barely see it so I have reported it again. The line across is actually quite clear at the moment and at the far end the farmer has put in a little post to indicate where path leaves Boudicca's Way. This is not actually the "official" path but the most sensible route for all concerned.

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

FP24 (Wood Green to Morningthorpe As anticipated, this path is completely unusable from Wood Green to where it leaves the field edge because of thick tall weeds such as hogweed, thistles and nettles The farmer has replaced the line of the path across the field but you have to walk in crop to get to it which is not good.

FP25 (part of Boudicca's Way from Parker's Lane through Tyrrel's Wood). A rather adventurous path once you get past the turning for Boudicca's Way with water, mud and tree trunks to negotiate. Great for kids. Less great if you're creaking a bit.

FP 26 (Parker's Lane winding through nearly to A140) . Out of bounds. However, I accessed it from BW25 (Tyrrel's Wood) out of interest to see if the repeater sign had been replaced – and it had. Must have been days before the fences went up. I hadn't realised at the time what a vast area would be affected so soon.

FP27 (from A140 opposite the kennels to Hayton's Lane 200 yards short of Wacton Common) The repeater sign at the boundary has still not been replaced. I have reported this again. It is not such a minor thing as in July when I attempted to inspect the path I couldn't actually find the crossing place as I had nothing to aim for. Needless to say, the farmer of the western half of this path had not replaced it and I became very entangled in his pea crop. I thought I was going to pass out. Amazingly, the section of path between the oak tree and Haynton's Lane had been cut, by whom I know not. However, the repeater sign had disappeared.

The rotten plank bridge is now worse and I have reported it again. The reporting system has changed and I'm not sure if old reports are still in the system.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN

Reported to Highways

1. FP27 rotten plank bridge
2. FP27 Missing repeater sign
3. FP20 Missing fingerpost A140 end
4. FP22 Fingerpost in hedge
5. Stile on FP18
6. Uprooted Fingerpost at FP5
7. Impassable FP24

Bonnie Wade, Long Stratton Voluntary Footpath Warden

September 9 2024