

Summer 2018 Parish Footpath Officer's Report

1) The other end of nowhere.

It seems that while Butterley Mill was working (before the Second World War), access to it was either down its own drive from the Butterley Lane to the north, or on foot from Great Wacton to the south. When the Mill ceased to operate, the public were no longer welcome along the now private drive, and so the footpath, still public as far as the Mill, had no northwards access to the lane. It simply stopped, at the end of a small bridge across the River Frome, a no-through-path after a mile or so of walking. In 2006 the Malvern Hills District Footpath Society submitted a formal request to reinstate Butterley Mill drive as a footpath (DMMO M287), which was due to be researched in 2014. It is still listed as pending, but after inquiry of the authorities, I can now reveal that as there was no evidence that the drive to the Mill was ever a public right of way, and in view of the reluctance of the present owners of the land on both sides to permit new public access to be granted, the request has been formally declined.

2) Broken bridges, access denied.

One of the three bridges along the Great Wacton/Butterley Mill path has missing treads and is dangerously rotten in places, and another is somewhat dilapidated. Since these bridges lead only to a few further yards of a dead-end route, it is not deemed worth the expense of repairing them, so the right of way over them is to be formally cancelled.

3) Broken gates.

There are two gates on the Wacton/Butterley bridlepath which are dilapidated, although both are still quite easy to open and close. These are due to be refurbished.

3a) Back on the beaten track.

The path across some of the fields west of Newbury Farm is completely obscured, but one can follow a good track around them. Further west, a new track closely, but not exactly, follows the route of the right of way, and is much more convenient to both walkers and landowner.

3b) There was once a road through the woods...

At the far western edge of the parish the path through a wood is completely obscured, so a detour around the edge is necessary, although theoretically a determined attack with cutting equipment would be the proper procedure!

4) Through the middle or round the edge.

Several rights of way theoretically go through the middle of fields, sometimes from one corner to another, and occasionally following the line of a fence which no longer exists. Some landowners provide a cleared path through crops, while others have made it convenient for walkers to go around the edge. Through pasture or plough either way seems unobjectionable.

5) Speculative application.

There is another outstanding application for a right of way, a bridle path from the old railway line near Great Wacton, eastwards over the River Frome and up to the Thornbury Road (DMMO M333). It has nothing to recommend it, particularly as the south-west end only connects to a footpath, not another bridle path, in the middle of a field, and so, given the somewhat tardy response to the previous request of 2006, this request is unlikely to come to anything in the short or long term.