

QUENDON & RICKLING
FOOTPATH SURVEY
AUTUMN 2015



INTRODUCTION

The initiative to conduct a Footpath Survey came from various sources; initially as an action listed in the Quendon & Rickling Village Plan, but also as a campaign led by The Ramblers called The Big Pathwatch. The survey was conducted by a group of volunteers in the Autumn of 2015.

Although entitled a Footpath Survey, this report covers all Public Rights of Way within the parish.

SUMMARY

All of the footpaths in and around the village have been surveyed and are generally well defined, although some signage needs replacing or improvement. A seasonal problem, and one that was evident in this survey, was overgrown vegetation

bordering some of the paths. There is a need to encourage householders and landowners alike to regularly cutback excessive growth on their boundaries adjacent to public paths. On occasions, access across fields is slow to be re-instated following ploughing or the planting of crops.

This report produces a number of actions to be undertaken and it is hoped that those of at least a practical nature can be completed before Spring 2016.

Finally, a big 'thank you' to all of those who took part and contributed by walking the paths, offering advice and information and for putting this report together.

FOOTPATH SURVEY REPORT

The following breaks down the various footpaths into sections. Identification is by a description that will be readily apparent to local people and, where possible, by the footpath number as shown in the 'Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way for the County of Essex'. A further means of identification is by a red letter indicating the area under review as shown on the map in Appendix 1.

i. By Quendon Church and to the south (21/22) & around Quendon Woods (3, 20) A

This path runs alongside the new graveyard. Some overhanging vegetation has been cut back by agents of the estate owners, but has not been trimmed where the path passes close to private dwellings and in places is suffering from overhanging branches and bushes. Signage, however, is good and no litter was detected.

The paths around the wood are fine and clearly delineated although signage at the north west corner could be better. Quendon woods (an SSSI) is an area, which does not come under the remit of this survey but does create a great deal of concern amongst local people due to access being totally denied and coppicing has damaged bluebell locations. This is a matter that is currently being pursued by the Parish Council.

Action – Request private property owners adjacent to paths to cut back their overhanging vegetation

ii. From Orchard House to the rear of Laundry Cottage across to the north of Quendon Woods (28, 22, 36, 21) B

Easy access along a clear mown path beside Orchard House, but slightly overgrown across the rear of Laundry Cottage. The path is rather muddy from the rear of Quendon Church, but is fairly clear and accessible to the woods. As the path

approaches the M11 area it becomes overgrown in places forcing a detour into the woods. The gate allowing access to the motorway was open at the time of walking, which is a potential danger as deer could gain access. Some items of litter were evident in this area.

iii. Paths through woodland adjacent to Coney Acre Wood (17,18,10) C and Appendix 2

Footpath A – there is a concrete sign on the corner of Green Road and Longridge, which is in reasonable condition. Some neon striplights and squeezy mops have been dumped at the start of the path next to Spinney Cottage. There is also a piece of angled-iron protruding from the ground near the junction with footpath D. There is a good sign at this junction but it is hidden in the bushes. From here on, footpath A is very overgrown on both sides, mostly with vicious brambles. Towards the western end, the path is not delineated and meanders off into the woods amid fallen branches to join footpath B. This path was moved some years ago and therefore there is uncertainty of its true direction.

Footpath B – this path is well used and generally clear of obstructions except at the eastern end where the tree branches are overhanging and are quite low. There was also evidence of dog fouling in the middle of this path. The signposts at both ends of the path are intact, but are damaged and need replacing.

Footpath C – at the junction with footpath B, the sign needs replacing on the post. This path is in good condition throughout its entire length to the farm track bordering the woods.

Footpath D – there is a good sign at the southern end of this path, but the sign at the farm-track end is missing from the post. This footpath may not be officially recognized, but villagers have walked it for many years. It has two main routes, but has changed directions quite frequently due to fallen trees and branches. This is a narrow woodland path, which one of the signs identifies as a footpath.

Action – clear litter next to Spinney Cottage and remove, if possible, the angled iron. Clear the bushes to enable the sign to be seen. Clear Footpath A of brambles. Request local agencies to repair or replace signage. Bridge at western corner needs attention

iv. To the west of Coney Acre (Parts of 8, 10,11,12,16) D

All paths in this section were generally in good condition. Some crossing arable land appear to be narrowing in width and have become rather bare in places due to continually being crossed by agricultural vehicles, which include spraying at times. Two paths across fields where crops have been planted are signposted but have not been re-delineated. The path is slightly overgrown through the hedge/ditch from Maces Farm field into Rickling Hall field.

Action – request landowners to ensure paths remain 1m to 1.8m wide. Ensure those paths that cross arable land are re-defined 14 days after being disturbed.

Action - Consider a handrail across the narrow footbridge (FB)

v. Paths in the northern part of the Parish (4, 5, 8, 35, 3, 2) E

These are all well defined bridlepaths, generally in good condition with a hardcore or concrete base and covering the more rural parts of the Parish. Path number 5 is within an old sunken lane and is a little rutted in places caused by vehicles.

A short path (3) from the Rickling Road follows the track into Coldhams Farm and another short footpath (2) is delineated across a field to emerge just north of Rickling.

vi. Circuit around Rickling Hall Farm (14, 15, 1) F

Path 14 is in very good condition, having mown grass and trimmed hedges. On entering the Rickling Hall Farm area, it is not evident as to which way the path goes as there is no signage. At Northey Wood (south of the farm) the sign indicates that the footpath crosses a field, but this has not been re-delineated due to crops being planted. At this point, the track ahead has a sign 'Private, No Public Right of Way', but would be an easier and obvious alternative, turning left and following the field boundary in approximately 300 yards. There is no sign at the right turn by Catherine Grove and it is only the wider path that makes this obvious. It should be noted that this part of the path is outside the Parish Boundary. Where Path 15 meets the road at Brixton Lane has been a notorious spot for fly tipping. Currently this area is fairly tidy, but has some litter including a full, tied-up plastic carrier bag.

Another well-delineated path (13) passes to the north and west of Rickling Hall

Action – propose a change in the footpath at Northey Wood to avoid crossing a small field.

Action – clear litter at junction of path 15 and Brixton Lane

vii. Junction on Belchams Lane running alongside Broomfield Wood (26), Broom Wood to Birds End (2 + 27) and across field (33) G

The footpath running across the field opposite Orchard House is not defined. The signpost is falling down outside the entrance to Broom Wood and the stile post broken. The footpath within the wood needs a slight trim going towards The Chequers pub.

The path coming out of the top of Broom Wood (diverted recently) is very lumpy and floods in winter when the pond is full. The track going across the field towards Birds End is becoming narrower each year. Certain parts of this path are becoming very muddy where the tractor has driven over and removed all the grass.

Action – Request local agencies to repair signage.

viii. Pavements within Rickling Green H

Generally of a good condition and used daily, although some are narrowing in places with grass encroaching upon the sides and weeds breaking through the tarmac which, over time, will cause the breakup of the hard surface.

Action – Request local agencies to repair and regularly maintain these pavements.

ix. Cambridge Road J

This footpath is alongside the B1383 in Quendon from the southern to the northern Parish Boundary. This is a busy road and in places the path is obstructed by hanging branches, weeds and bushes, which forces the pedestrian to step onto the road itself. The path needs a considerable amount of repair and maintenance not only within the parish boundary, but also towards Newport to the north, and towards Stansted Mountfichet to the south.

Action – Continue discussions with the Highways Authority and demand that action is taken to clear this path

CONCLUSION

The paths around the village appear to be well-used and regular reminders to householders, landowners and appropriate agencies to clear overhanging vegetation should keep them accessible. A few signposts need replacing or repairing.

A small working-group of volunteers should be set up to carry these recommendations and actions forward, and local walkers should be encouraged to report and comment on any problems with these public rights of way to the established local contacts.

A copy of this report will be distributed to those listed below and people using these paths will be encouraged to act responsibly and to follow The Countryside Code.

Sally Kitcat & Brandon Chapman

Q & R Parish Council

Jan. 2016

Distributed to:-

Local residents through village website and local media

UDC

ECC

Highways Authority

The Ramblers