



# ST. IPPOLYTS P3 NEWS

Parish Paths Partnership

Issue 1

October 2017

## Welcome to the first annual newsletter of St Ippolyts Parish Paths Partnership.

It was decided at last year's P3 AGM that it would be better to inform members and Parish Councillors of any relevant news and issues in a newsletter rather than the usual annual meeting. Sadly, gone are the days of Countryside Management Services involvement in P3 and of cosy AGMs in the stunning surroundings of Maydencroft Manor with Bob Williams' hospitality and chairmanship. In spite of the decline in attendance of meetings, St Ippolyts P3 members are still actively involved in the upkeep and maintenance of the parish footpaths and bridleways, keeping them in the same fine condition that they have been during the prior years of P3 and CMS activity.

I hope that you find time to read this newsletter. As this is the first issue, I would be pleased to hear your comments or suggestions for anything that you would like to be added, omitted or expanded upon in future issues. Please send any feedback or comments to the Parish Clerk.



## Three cheers for Councillor Thake!

We must give our sincere thanks to Councillor Richard Thake for his involvement at County Hall concerning the flooding problems there have been with footpath 16. The path is a bridleway beginning at Stevenage Road in St Ippolyts village. After following woodland downhill and crossing a wooden bridge, FP16 follows a stream and passes through a bridge under the A602 Wymondley bypass, then carries on all the way to Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley. There have been problems for many years with flooding where the stream passes through a concrete gully under the bridge, causing deep mud to be deposited on the path. The gully overflows onto the adjoining concrete footpath because of the build-up of silt and subsequent weed growth that clogs the stream restricting flow. During winter months in particular the path is frequently ankle deep in liquid mud. The final solution has been for the landowner to clear out the stream either side of the concrete gully, and the removal of silt and weed from under the bridge by HCC. Although this may sound like an easy task to organise, it involved the HCC Countryside Access Officer arranging for the farmer to clear the stream and for HCC Highways Dept to employ contractors to clear the gully. Thankfully, Councillor Thake was able to speak to the relevant departments at County Hall and a satisfactory outcome has been achieved.



## **2 out of 10 for National Grid, must do better!**

Would you have thought that a FTSE 100 company with staff numbering in excess of 25,000 and an annual operating income of over £400,000,000 (2016 figures), would maintain their worksites and permissive paths on their own land? Well, sadly you would have thought wrongly.

Repeatedly over the past few years Susan Mears, our Parish Clerk, has emailed National Grid PLC in an effort to encourage them to arrange maintenance to their permissive footpath around the Wymondley substation, which you may have assumed to be part of an established annual maintenance programme. To my knowledge, National Grid had arranged for landscape gardeners to clear the overgrown path in November 2014 and again in January 2016. I don't know how the path was maintained before 2014. Either the nettles and brambles hadn't taken over quite so dominantly or there were P3 work party sessions throughout the growing season.

In fairness, following a site meeting with a representative of the National Grid landscape

*Although I am not a fan of 'Graffiti Artists' and their vandalism of the urban environment, I must congratulate whoever the artist was who made his mark on the wall of FP16 under the by-pass.*

*I hope he too appreciates Councillor Thake's involvement in keeping his boots mud free.*

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gardening contractors, the damaged fence between the footpath and the substation was partly repaired, but clearing the vegetation as discussed at the same time was not tackled at all. Thankfully, a local resident has come to the rescue and paid out of his own pocket for his own contractor to clear the path.

### **Shame on you National Grid.**

At the moment, P3 volunteers are regularly keeping the nettles & brambles under control so that the path remains open, but large sections of the wire fence between the footpath and the National Grid substation land are in need of repair owing to many broken fence posts.





## What exactly do P3 volunteers do?

There are 28 footpaths within St Ippolyts Parish - two of which are permissive paths running through private property. In theory, the permissive paths are trouble free, being maintained by the landowner, which works well for the footpath across farmland, but not so well through National Grid property.

Six of the St Ippolyts Parish footpaths are cut twice each year by Herts County Council contractors, the remainder of the paths being maintained by P3 volunteers when necessary. There are also nine kissing gates and a stile that need clearing and tidying a couple of times each year, and three finger posts that regularly disappear within overgrown hedges in the summer. At the moment we are keeping on top of the footpath work, but we could always use extra help.

How about carrying a pair of secateurs with you on your walks around the parish and trimming any overgrowth before it becomes a problem?

In recent years footpath 14 at the side of St Ippolyts JMI School has needed attention a few times. Firstly with a fallen tree which was cleared quite promptly by HCC contractors, but twice last year when there were problems with exceptionally tall nettles that fell across the path after heavy rain, rendering it almost impassable. The nettles have been cut back to ground level 3 or 4 times this year, and the HCC contractor has tidied the area and removed the remnants of the fallen tree. I fear that the nettle roots are so well established that removal of the roots by digging or regular trimming of the nettles is the only answer.

## Litter, fly tipping and dog fouling.

Litter doesn't seem to be much of a problem on any of the Parish paths at the moment, although on FP14 next to St Ippolyts School there are often crisp packets and sweet wrappers to be found. Most dog owners seem to be aware of the hazards of dog waste and clear up after their pets. The NHDC's latest attempt to save money by removing the dog waste bins has not affected the Parish paths at all, as there were no bins on any of our paths - although there are still Parish Council's bins on the Broadmeadow estate, Dell Field and Gosmore Village Green. There have not been many instances of fly tipping either, except for the bath in the middle of FP27 which was full of old broken ceramic wall tiles.



(I have since discovered where the remainder of the old bathroom has been disposed of. The toilet pan, hand basin, shower screen, miscellaneous building waste and garden rubbish has been tipped onto FP16 at the Stevenage Road end, Little Wymondley. As the perpetrator has also left his toolbox, maybe this is his last bathroom makeover project!)

Let's hope that the latest cost saving idea of discontinuing the fortnightly garden waste bin collections doesn't come to fruition, as I am sure that this will result in an increase of fly tipping on paths with vehicular access.

## Bridleways



By Paul Pinkstone

All the Bridleways in the Parish appear to be in good condition, with little mud to cause problems for walkers. We have noticed in recent years that there are fewer riders using the Bridleways and tracks. This could be due to fewer horses, or owners tending to go to arenas. The other main reason is that the roads are too busy to reach the access points to the bridleways.

As members check their paths could you make a note, and report, any low over hanging branches or narrow sections, as a horse and rider need at least 10ft.of height and 6ft. width.

## Winter Walk.

Many thanks to Paul Pinkstone for organising last year's Winter Walk. An excellent walk was enjoyed by over 30 people, starting and ending at The Sue Ryder Home, Stagenhoe, where, on our return, we were served with homemade soup and tea/coffee in the conservatory and met some of the residents.

Thanks to Ellie, Joan and Linda for making the soup and to Paul for supplying the crusty bread. Following the walk, a collection was made for The Sue Ryder home.

This year's walk will be held on  
29<sup>th</sup> December.  
See information page below.

## Groundworks Grant

Each year, a £1000 Groundworks grant is available to P3 for the upkeep or improvement of the Parish paths.

We have in the past used the grant for bushes planted on the Village Green near to the School. The bushes are now well established, but meadow mats (turf impregnated with wild flower seeds), that were purchased with the grant and planted in the same place a year or two later were a disappointment, with little or no success at all. Other purchases from the grant have been secateurs & gardening gloves (distributed to P3 volunteers) and a strimmer, ear defenders and gloves that are used frequently for path trimming.

We have not taken advantage of The Groundwork for a couple of years. Benches have been suggested in the past, but there have been problems finding a suitable location. A local farmer seemed favourable to having a bench beside one of the paths across his land, but he changed his mind and the plan was shelved. If anyone has any suggestions for a possible project or need for the grant please inform the Parish Clerk.

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We hope you have enjoyed this, our first P3 newsletter. Any comments would be most welcomed.

The footpaths are there for everyone to use, so if you are concerned about keeping them in good condition and have a little time to spare, why not get involved and help out with some work.

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St. Ippolyts Parish Paths Group

# WINTER WALK

**Friday 29th December 2017**

**Meet: 10:30**

**Start: Sue Ryder Home Stagenhoe SG4 8BY**

**Circular walk of approx. 4 miles  
(1 ½ to 2 hours)**

*Sensible footwear, dogs on leads please.*

**Home-made soup served at Sue Ryder Home on return.**

**ALL WELCOME!**

If you would like to join us, to give an idea of  
numbers please call

Roger on 01462 453752 or 07896620243