

FARRINGTON GURNEY PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL FOOTPATHS REPORT

17 MAY 2021

FOOTPATHS REPRESENTATIVE: Cllr Sally Bown

This time last year we were blessed with glorious weather and people were able to enjoy our parish footpaths and so many villagers discovered what an asset they are to the village. Certainly, the covid restrictions were made more tolerable when families could, perhaps for the first time, share both the physical and mental health benefits of walking.

The winter was very wet and did make some areas hard going and now following the recent rains gateways and some tracks are very sticky. Roll on dry weather!

There are a minority of walkers who seem unable to keep to a footpath and tend to think the path extends to a third of the field. This destroys crops and can be costly for the farmer or landowner. Signs are there for a reason.

Some dog owners appear to completely relinquish their responsibilities as a owner once they walk into a field with a footpath. Once off its lead the animal is allowed to run through crops and pasture and allowed to relieve itself as it needs. Pasture which has been fouled on by a dog is not palatable to stock. Children are particularly vulnerable to toxocariasis when they roll around on grass or touch infected soil where dogs with the roundworm parasite have been. Dogs' excrement on footpaths and elsewhere remains an issue and used dog mess bags continue to decorate hedges and pathways.

Another reason for dogs to be kept under the owner's control is the risk of stock being chased and in the case of sheep causing the animal to abort. Recently when I was foolish enough to remind a walker with dogs that were chasing young cattle of their responsibility, I was given a very negative response and informed it was my fault for startling the dogs when I appeared through a kissing gate.

Maintenance and upgrading of stiles, pedestrian gates and Waymarker signs have suffered in the past year as council staff were restricted in their travelling around to carry out repairs etc. We have had a replacement pedestrian gate at the beginning of the track up to the church when the original was taken. Annoyingly it was found dumped in the same field some distance away some time later. Someone's idea of fun!

At the parish boundary just beyond the Arnhem memorial a new kissing gate was erected next to the ancient keyhole stile which was in disrepair. This has now been made safe and therefore preserved. These stone keyhole stiles are a typical Somerset peculiar and probably because they are sunk deep in the ground and are very heavy have avoided being stolen.

Routine cutting and trimming has been carried out and yellow discs renewed as needed, brambles remain the bane of my life. So enjoy and treasure our many paths and introduce those who are unaware of them of their benefits.

Cllr Sally Bown