

Westbury sub Mendip Parish Council

Report by Parish Paths Liaison Officer December 2nd 2022.

Following the virtual end of the Covid pandemic, the increased use of paths for recreational walking has continued, but perhaps on a smaller level than during periods of lockdown. With active help from individuals to clear and maintain them, the now waymarked paths are becoming part of peoples' known landscape features. This not only benefits locals but helps walking tourism and the rural economy. There are still improvements to be made, and I look forward to achieving some of these in 2023.

- 1) Cropping of paths on land owned by the Church Commissioners.

Complaints were made again this year about paths on fields near the centre of the village being ploughed and not reinstated. No remedial action was taken, and maize crops were planted over paths 13/2, 13/3, and 13/10. This was despite the tenant being sent letters of instruction by the landowners and Somerset County Council Highway Authority.

As had occurred in 2021, action by myself and other members of the public was successful in establishing these paths by walking them. This action, combined with waymarking, has led to increased use of the paths by the public. I hope this will become even greater next year, whatever the outcome of cropping activity. The struggle to get the tenant to obey the law will continue, with enforcement being an option which might have to be reluctantly sought.

- 2) Several waymarked posts were recently renewed, with the help of Paul Hamilton, who has also improved the safety and efficiency of a number of stiles in the parish, using wire netting on steps and new supports for footrests. Paul has also renewed the painted lettering on a number of fingerposts, and cleared weeds from field edges. I would like to thank Paul for his know-how and active help throughout this year.
- 3) Two of the new steps over the old railway line on path 13/2 were destroyed by a contractor's flail in the late summer. I repaired these. The damage caused by careless use of the flail on hedges is a perennial problem, but it is a wonder how these steps were destroyed in this way.
- 4) An application is about to be made, for the short path known as Pump House Path, to be added to the definitive map. This path is not presently recognised as a Right of Way, but its use has been uncontested for at least several decades, meaning that its recognition should be easy, albeit that processing the application could take some time. Once established as a Right of Way, the path would be safe for the future, from any attempt to block, alter, or remove it. It is felt that this would be an important asset for off-road walking within the village. At present it is not signed, and its use would be encouraged by discreet signage.
- 5) It could be said to be beyond my remit to comment on walking routes which are not Rights of Way. However, it is important to mention that there are two projects under way to improve the lot of walkers within the parish boundaries. I won't describe these now, but both are in progress, and I hope to be able to report with good news about these, next year.

Colin Booth

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2 / 12 / 2022.