



# Humber, Ford and Stoke Prior Bridleways

Annual Report - 2021

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## SUMMARY

This report updates my previous 4 reports of 2017 - 2020. I will only report where improvements and changes have been made during the year or where deficiencies remain. Some of these deficiencies have remained unresolved for a number of years.

Many gates continue to be impossible to open from the mounted position and a number are tied with binder twine, have difficult latches or chains necessitating dismounting and opening with two hands.

The very wet winter this year has caused some sections of routes to be submerged and impassable for extended periods.

Due to some of these obstacles and many difficult gates, some of the PROW within the Parish area now see very little traffic. Riders are increasingly discouraged from using them, forcing additional use of busy and sometimes dangerous roads.

Routes in this report are designated as per the Herefordshire Council PROW and Highways map (e.g. FD 3, SP 28).

Gates are numbered with the PROW number and the Parish Clerk's designation. (e.g. SP 28.1 for gate 1 on PROW SP 28)

## BRIDLEWAYS

FD 3/SP 28 – Ford to Briery Mere to Witsets.

The route starts at Ford and runs up through the Hickory Stick Golf Course. Some riders have mentioned to me this year their concern at crossing the fairway when golf balls have occasionally passed close to riders scaring the horses. The route itself over the Golf Course is clear and well maintained.

After leaving the Golf Course the route runs up alongside a field to gate SP28.4. The landowner is now maintaining an excellent strip for riders along this headland (Photo 1).



Photo 1. FD 3 (April 2021)

Gate SP 28.4 remains in need of replacement (Photo 2); the gate was worked on in 2019 so the latch now closes but it is still too low for a mounted rider to be able to open and close and requires two hands to move the gate. **No change since 2019.**



Photo 2. SP 28.4 (April 2021)

Gate No SP 28.3 was replaced in 2018 with a rider-friendly gate and the undergrowth cut back (Photo 3). But the landowner insisted the previous old metal gate be restored (Photo 4). This gate has an old metal latch that cannot be opened from the mounted position (Photo 5), so the latch is left off and a rope has been attached that can be raised from the mounted position to open the gate. **No Change since 2019.**



Photo 3. SP 28.3 (2018)



Photo 4. SP 28.3 (2019)



Photo 5. SP28.3 (April 2021)

The route across from SP28.3 to Briery Mere (Photos 6, 7, 8 and 9) has been impassable for many months this year – as in previous years. It was ploughed in September and planted in October, directly over the PROW with no restoration work conducted throughout the winter despite the engagement of the Parish Clerk and discussions with the landowner about re-routing the PROW around the edge of the field (which he declined to consider). The wet winter exacerbated the situation and as a result most riders avoided the route which was dangerous for horses and risked injury to tendons if used.



Photo 6. SP 28 2-3 (October 2020)



Photo 7. SP28 2-3 (January 2021)

The “restoration” work by the landowner was finally completed at the end of April, nearly 7 months after it was ploughed and drilled.



Photo 8. SP 28 2-3 (April 2021)



Photo 9. SP28 2-3 (April 2021)

From the edge of the field, the restored route runs parallel to the hedgerow to SP28.3. It is to be hoped that in future this part will not be ploughed again and over time will become firm and passable throughout the year.

From Wickton Lane, SP28 then heads through a new gate SP 28.2 (Photo 10). This gate was replaced in 2019. Regrettably, the gate furniture was incorrectly fitted, and the handle does not open the latch even when fully pulled to the open position. This requires riders to dismount and open the latch by hand. The route alongside the crop through the field towards Witsets continues to be clear and well maintained.



Photo 10. SP 28.2 (April 2021)



Photo 11. SP28.1 (2018)

Gate SP28.1 (Photo 11) at the entrance to the narrow lane leading to Bowley Lane was replaced in 2017. Regrettably, the replacement wooden gate is too narrow for a horse to pass through safely and requires riders to dismount and open the larger metal gate. This metal gate cannot be closed as the bar does not fit into the catch. The gate also drags along the ground as it was mounted incorrectly when first installed (Photo 12), so riders have no alternative but to leave it open. **No Change since 2018.**



Photo 12. SP28.1 (2020)

The route then exits the narrow lane onto the road South of the Witsets. The area here is prone to flooding (Photo 13) with water running off the field to the South and was impassable for many months of the year.



Photo 13. SP28 (February 2021)

### SP 12 – Briery Mere to Norman’s Farm.

The route starts from SP 28 at Briery Mere heading towards Norman’s Farm. Potatoes have been planted quite close to the edge of the field this year, but it is still passable although not of the required width (Photo 14).



Photo 14. (April 2021)

Gate SP 12.2 (Photo 15) after opening, cannot be closed when mounted as it has dropped slightly, and the latch will not fit except by lifting the gate with two hands.



Photo 15. SP 12.2 (April 2021)

The route between SP 12.2 to SP 12.3 has been deeply rutted this year by farm traffic making it difficult to use (Photo 16).



Photo 16. SP 12 2-3 (March 2021)

The PROW officially ends before gate SP 12.3. The gate is passable on horseback but in winter very deep in mud, making it difficult to use. The request for the PROW to extend down into the village with a diversion around Norman's Farm is still ongoing I believe.



Photo 17. SP 12.3 (March 2021)

## SP 17 – Witsets to Trap Cottage.

Access from Witsets to Wickton Lane is clear (Photo 18), well maintained and regularly topped with hedges trimmed back (many thanks to the Lengthsman and Pete L-H). It has this year periodically seen some illegal quad bike traffic (NFI) using this route up from the village that has rutted the track during wet weather.



Photo 18. (2017)

The route from Wickton Lane down through the sunken path to Trap Cottage has again been cut back during the year, illegally dumped rubble was removed by the Lengthsman, and it is now much more accessible.

### SP 27 – Wickton Lane to Sunnybank/Bowley Lane.

Crops continue to be planted directly over the PROW from Wickton lane (Photo 19), but a path was again restored through the crop that made the route passable for most of the year. The rest of the route is passable including the gates SP27.1 and SP27.2.



Photo 19. SP27 (April 2021)

## HU 4 – Humber to Buckland (Parish Boundary).

Entrance to the route is through gate HU 4.1 behind Humber Court that requires riders to dismount (Photo 20), open with two hands and lift to swing open. **No Change since 2018.**



Photo 20. HU 4.1 (2018)

Route then crosses directly through a field regularly filled with cattle (and occasionally a bull) then through another gate HU 4.2 (Photo 21). The horse-friendly long handle was removed a number of years ago making it now necessary to dismount to open – not great if the bull is in the vicinity. **No Change since 2018.**



Photo 21. HU 4.2 (2018)

Route then runs into a further field that leads down to gate HU 4.3 over a narrow bridge (Photo 22). This gate was replaced in 2019, can be opened from the mounted position, although the spring has been set too tight and the gate can close quickly into the rider passing through.



Photo 22. HU 4.3 (2020)

Route then heads towards Buckland where a new gate HU 4.4 (Photo 23) was installed in 2018. This is the perfect gate for a Bridleway: it can be opened easily from the mounted position with one hand and has been properly fitted so that it swings back gently to close once the rider passes through. In a perfect world all gates would be like this one. **No Change since 2018.**



Photo 23. HU 4.4 (2019)

Gate HU 4.5 requires two hands to open from the dismounted position and is difficult to close as it has dropped slightly (Photo 24). **No Change since 2017.**



Photo 24. HU 4.5 (2020)

All further gates HU 4.6, HU 4.7, HU 4.8 (Photos 24,25 and 26) to Buckland are chained and difficult to open and require riders to dismount multiple times and open with two hands. Because of this, riders are discouraged from using this route and it now sees little traffic. **No Change since 2017.**



Photo 25. HU 4.6 (2019)



Photo 26. HU 4.7 (2019)



Photo 27. HU 4.8 (2019)

## HU 10 Risbury to PG 11 and Marston.

The route starts through a double gate HU 10.1 (Photo 28) that can be difficult for riders. The two gates do not close easily (Photo 29) and need to be lifted with two hands to close.



Photo 28. SP HU 10.1 (April 2021)



Photo 29. HU 10.1 (April 2021)

Gate HU 10.2 (Photo 30) can be opened from the mounted position.



Photo 30. HU 10.2 (April 2021)

Beyond HU 10.2, the drainage has improved somewhat over the last year (compare April 2020 with April 2021 - Photos 31 and 32). The new owners have fenced off the PROW to the correct width and access is better than previously.



Photo 31. (April 2020)



Photo 32. (April 2021)



Photo 33. HU 10 2-3 (April 2021)

Someone is maintaining the route (HU 10 2-3) as the grass has recently been cut (Photo 33).



Photo 34. HU 10.3 (April 2021)

Gate HU 10.3 (Photo 34) has had some DIY repairs (Photo 35) but is in need of replacement as it is rotten in parts (Photo 36).



Photo 35. HU 10.3 (April 2021)



Photo 35. HU 10.3 (April 2021)

The catch on Gate HU 10.4 (Photo 36) is not the standard for a PROW but can be operated from the mounted position with care.



Photo 36. HU 10.4 (April 2021)

The remainder of HU 10 is passable and well maintained and eventually joins PG 11.

### PG 11 from Marston to Parish Boundary.

Gate PG 11.1 has been removed and is now just a gap in the hedge. Gate PG 11.2 is difficult to navigate due to the close proximity of the recently dug drainage trench (Photo 37) and the gate latch of the single gate (single (Photo 38) and double (Photo 39)) needs replacing.



Photo 37. PG 11.2 (April 2021)



Photo 38. PG 11.2a (April 2021)



Photo 39. PG 11.2b (April 2021)

From the dingle, the route rises towards gate PG 11.3 (Photo 40) just below Sheepcote. The gate can with some dexterity be operated from the mounted position.



Photo 40. PG 11.3 (April 2021)



Photo 41. PG 11.4 (April 2021)

Gate PG 11.4 (Photo 41) can be opened from the mounted position.

The gate at PG 11.6 (Photo 42) is chained and requires a dismount and two hands to open and close. **No Change since 2017.**



Photo 42 PG 11.6 (March 2021)

From Marston Cottages the route enters the field through PG 11.9 (Photo 43) and runs directly across to Marston Firs. In previous years riders were content to skirt around the field as the landowner had left an excellent headland. This year the route is cropped over and there is no headland, so riders will need to find their own route through the crop (Photo 44).



Photo 43. PG 11.9 (April 2019)



Photo 44. PG 11 9-10 (March 2021)

The route enters Marston Firs through gate PG 11.10 (Photo 45) which has been improved since my previous reports and can now be opened when mounted.



Photo 45. PG 11.10 (March 2021)

The route exits the wood through PG 11.11 and continues to Hegdon Hill outside the Parish Boundary. Since 2019 (Photo 46) the gate has been replaced. Although not as wet as previously, at certain times of the year it remains difficult for horses to use this gate due to the boggy ground (Photo 47).



Photo 46 PG 11.11 (2019)



Photo 47. PG 11.11 (March 2021)

Beyond gate PG 11.11 is outside the Parish boundary – into Pencombe PC – so for information only. The gate PG 11.12 is tied up with binder twine, the latch does not fit into the catch and it is a dismount and two-handed job to open.



Photo 48. PG 11.12 (March 2021)

Also, at the top of the hill at PG 11.13 the gate is tied with binder twine and needs a dismount and two hands to open.



Photo 49. PG 11.13 (March 2021)