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LATEST NEWS

Here is the second issue of "Now Open"- a new initiative from the Sussex Area of the Ramblers. The aim of this newsletter is to publicise footpaths and other places to walk in Sussex that have recently become open and easy to use and to encourage walk leaders and other walkers to plan walks using these ways.

The newsletter is now being received by nearly a hundred people active in the Ramblers in Sussex, as well as people and groups outside the Ramblers who are interested in receiving it. They include councillors, walking groups, parish councils and others. If you have received it via someone else and you want to get the newsletter in future then you need to email me at chris.smith@hbhelp.co.uk. (If you want to be taken off of the list then email me at the same address). Your email will not be given to anyone else or used for any other purpose. Suggestions for improvement are always welcome.

The second issue continues to have an East Sussex bias. News from West Sussex is welcomed.

NEWLY OPEN

Please send details of any path or other walking area in Sussex that has recently been opened up. There are no clear rules about what "recently" means. Tell us about any path that has been closed for some time and now reopened and that walkers from outside the immediate area might not know about. Don't forget brand new paths and access areas too! Please give grid references and a general idea of where the path is. It is helpful if you can give some idea of good walks that can be done using the path.



Hastings

Michael Riley reports that Hastings 377 & 376 run up Ecclesbourne Glenn and were for many years closed due to the bridges being deemed unsafe and subsequently collapsing. In the autumn of 2008 ESCC replaced both bridges and in so doing opened up the paths and allowing the public access to what was recently voted on TV to be one of the most beautiful spots in East Sussex. The reference is 858101(.5). Both bridges are within 100 meters of each other. Picture to the left.

A little earlier in 2008 E.S.S.C. replaced the bridge on Hastings 32A which had previously been closed for approx. 3 years due to vandalism. This path provides a well used link

between Hollington with Crowhurst and as with the above, it's reopening has been much appreciated by local walkers and the public in general.

Iden

FP 31: This path, which forms part of the Saxon Shore Way, had been obstructed by farm machinery, locked gates and tied sheep hurdles. Having been approached by the County Council the landowner removed the obstructions and provided much improved access for walkers without gates (see photographs below - TQ 9397/2520) Photos below by ESCC



Laughton

FP 47 & 48: This path was found to be blocked by three fences and two hazardous sleeper bridges during the network survey. Whilst ESCC's Maintenance Team was repairing the bridges (a County Council duty) the Area Officer negotiated the installation of three squeeze stiles with the landowner. This work will be complete by the end of June and will make two footpaths re-available for public use. (TQ 5050/1200)

Ditchling

FP 34b: It was reported to ESCC that a farmer had built a new chicken run on the path, obstructing it in two places. On further investigation by the council's Area Officer it became clear that the obstructed path was not the definitive route. The official path had not been used for many years and was obstructed by a different fence and a hedge. Following a request by the Area Officer, the farmer re-instated the official line within a week, also waymarking the correct route at the same time. (TQ 3310/1570)

Camber



5c: Having already undertaken several bridge replacements in the Camber/East Guldeford area over the past year, another bridge was recently replaced by ESCC's Capital Bridge Team in advance of two walks by Ramblers from both Kent and Sussex. Jerry Kind, Rother Area RA local footpath secretary, had given the Council advance warning of the walk, as had a counterpart in Kent who also planned to use the path in April. The bridge was immediately put to use as the attached photograph illustrates (courtesy of Jerry Kind). (TQ 9500/2130.) Jerry says that There is also considerable improvement to paths in Iden parish due to ESCC & local working group efforts.

Ticehurst

FP 26: A landowner on this path had recently obstructed the route with a barbed wire fence. Following an initial contact by our Enforcement Officer, the landowner installed a step in the fence, contrary to ESCC's requests for complete removal of the unlawful structure. Therefore, the RoW Team undertook enforcement work on site and removed the fence away from the line of the footpath - making public access easier. The landowner will also pay the costs incurred by ESCC in carrying out this enforcement work. (TQ6599/2903.)

Hartfield

Holtje Common: Several footpaths cross Holtje Common Golf Course in Hartfield parish. Following several complaints from walkers, ESCC's Rights of Way Maintenance Team carried out a survey of these routes - followed by a comprehensive installation of signposting across the golf course. It is now much easier for the public to follow the legal lines of the paths. This should also help to reduce any particular conflict between walkers and golfers. (TQ4582/3936.)

Wivelsfield

If you have attempted to walk from east to west past Strood Farm at 357206 you might have come across the scene in the picture on the right. But Michael Hill says "The patch seems to be drained (cannot quite see how, but it is much better than other comparable places around just now), the hedge has been cut back and, most important of all, a few paving stones have been put down" To be avoided no longer!



WALKS ON NEWLY OPENED ROUTES

Are you organising a walk that takes in a recently opened path? Send us the details. Please say what new path(s) you are using, a brief description of the walk, the time date and meeting point, mileage and how to contact the organiser if people want to come. We also welcome short accounts of walks you have done. Bear in mind that the newsletter goes out at the beginning of each month with a deadline of 24th of the month before.

SUNDAY 17TH MAY FOREDOWN- Brighton

Meet at Foredown Tower (Grid reference TQ 256073) at 10.30 to explore the new right to roam access rights north of Brighton. Bus 6 leaves Brighton Station at 9.53 and Churchill Square shortly after. Get off at Foredown Road or Warrior Close, five minute walk. For details contact action4access@googlemail.com

For details of general Ramblers walks see http://www.ramblers.org.uk/areas_groups/groupswalksfinder.htm

Report- 26th April, East Guldiford

Rother Ramblers walked the improved paths of this area with a party of 29 from the Loddon Valley Group of the Ramblers who were visiting Rye for the weekend. Rother Ramblers produced four walks over the weekend for the visitors and in total 43 walkers used the new bridges. The photo above shows a group of 15 carrying out a "load test".

Report- 19th April, Beddingham Downs

The Action for Access walk round the Itford, Tarring Neville, and Beddingham Downs on 19th April went sunnily and happily. Fifteen walkers from a range of backgrounds, including several Ramblers Association members, turned out, mostly by train to Southease. Most walkers returned via the Beddingham bostal to Glynde railway station, stopping off at the Trevor Arms for refreshment on the way. It was a convivial and interesting walk on ground that is scarcely used by the public, despite it being Access Land.

STILL CLOSED

Sadly, there are still a lot of paths that have been closed for some time.

You can see a list of these for West Sussex at:

<http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/the-west-sussex-countryside/public-rights-of-way/4-unavailable-routes/unavailable-paths-list.en>

The East Sussex list is due to be available by the end of the month at

<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/rightsofway/default.htm>

It will be updated on a weekly basis.

Please let us know of any paths that have been unavailable for at least a year which are not on these lists. Please let us know the grid reference of the problem(s), what the problem is and the footpath number if you know it. Here are reports which came in this month:

Newhaven

Peter Seed reports that Newhaven 9 is effectively blocked on two counts. It runs from 455008 south to the railway line where the presumed former railway crossing connection to the Ouse Valley/Vanguard Way no longer exists. Nevertheless even as a dead end path it is of interest as it weaves through the open flood plain on a raised embankment shaded by trees with views over surrounding countryside. The trees etc

however are out of control and as one proceeds southwards particularly in summer one is impeded by nettles, brambles, elder and blackthorn in particular until a complete impasse is reached.

The coastal path (Newhaven 40a) is still blocked by Newhaven Ports and Properties by a fence towards the western end. A third path in Newhaven at Denton (Newhaven 34b) is completely blocked by vegetation.

Chalvington and Ripe

Chalvington and Ripe Byway 33 and 34 will be closed for six months to enable remedial works to be carried out on the surfaces, advises Godfrey Howard.

Laughton

Geoff Tilly writes about "an old chestnut that I have been chasing for 11 years....There is no trace on the ground of the footpath running SE off the B2124 E.of Laughton from TQ505128 to 507125 (generally towards Marchants farm) The main path from Laughton Church E. to Marchants Farm is OK, as is the diagonal up to the B2124 from 507125, but the SE "feeder" I cite is not there." He says that all that is needed is 2 finger posts, 2 new stiles & 2 railway sleeper type footbridges

THE CURRENT SITUATION

According to statistics required to be collected by the government the number of paths open and easy to use in East Sussex is 57.1% (up from 51.1% last year) East Sussex has 2,000 miles of paths. If you look of the number of rights of way officers per mile of footpaths and compare the East Sussex figures with other councils the council is understaffed by about 50%. The statistics compare very unfavourably with other councils in the region. West Sussex council claims 98% of its paths are easy to use using a different methodology. Rambler Nigel Sloan, who has walked extensively in West Sussex, calculates that 90% is a more accurate figure. Kent, which could argue that it is as cash strapped as East Sussex, does better. Staff at ESCC work hard but there are not enough of them.

A path is classed as not open as easy to use if there is no signpost at one end or if it is completely obstructed or anything in between, so it would be wrong to say that 42% of East Sussex paths are completely unusable, but the figures do give an indication of the state of play. It is clear that the situation varies widely from parish to parish depending on the level of pressure exerted by parish councils and walking groups..

In the current financial situation we cannot be sure that the situation in West Sussex will continue. County council elections will be held at the beginning of June and you may wish to impress upon those seeking your vote how important walking is.

GETTING YOUR FINGERS DIRTY

East Sussex Council organises volunteers to do practical work on footpaths. To get involved contact Rachel Solomons on 0345 6080193

This information was compiled from usually reliable sources, but mistakes get made and things do change. Please let us know about any mistakes or changes.

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Ramblers - at the heart of walking

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