

I've now been Footpath Officer for Taunton Deane Ramblers almost 2 years. I have to say that very little seems to have changed in 40 years since I last took an interest in these matters.

Looking back, I am pleased to say the old Pound Stretchers path by the river Tone is now open. The Town Council decided to 'pause' its application to have the path added to the Definitive map on advice from Rights of Way. I have now persuaded the council to continue this application, even though it may take 25 to 30 years to have it processed.

There continues to be controversies. Rights of Way want to divert a small part of a path in Durston as it runs under a barn. This is because the farmer wants a change of use from agriculture to business. However, as none of the path can be accessed, there seems little point in spending officer time on a planning exercise. We continue discussion to see how this problem can be resolved.

I can report a new bridge at Pitminster! It could not be used in the summer as the field to it was ploughed and cropped, with maze! It's impossible to get through. When I complained about this, Rights of Way told me to go round the edge of the field. I questioned why they were inviting me to trespass and how that impacted their insurance, no answer.

With the expansion of building in general, planning applications come in regularly. They are often modified many times and each time there is a different planning case number. It is time consuming to try to keep up with them all and to see if they interfere with any paths.

Personally, I feel the whole way the Rights of Way department work could do with updating. I have asked for an interview with the councillor who chairs the committee which looks after Rights of Way, I haven't had a response as yet.

Brenda Prentice.

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