

Our Footpath work

As voluntary footpath wardens for Little Bealings, our role is defined by the Parish Council and we do have what could be broadly described as a 'job description'. I will just mention a few of the duties we carry out on behalf of the PC.

It is of course a pre-requisite of our role to have a good knowledge of where public rights of way and established permissive paths exist in the parish and both John and I are keen and regular walkers who know the footpaths in the area intimately. John has lived in the village for over 20 years and although I only moved here 4 years ago, I grew up just a mile away in Great Bealings and spent much of my youth wandering the paths, lanes and fields around Bealings, so I know them very well.

We carry out regular inspections of all the public footpaths within the parish. Any matters which need attention, such as broken footpath signs, stiles & gates in poor condition, obstructed footpaths etc. are reported to Suffolk County Council's Rights of Way service and followed up if necessary. We do report back to the Parish Council on various footpath matters as and when necessary and these reports can be found in the PC minutes.

We also carry out occasional pruning and vegetation clearance work where necessary – this is complementary to the two cuts per year which are carried out by Suffolk County Council. We have a small band of footpath volunteers from around the village, who we can call on to help with our footpath work if necessary and we would always welcome more helpers! Any volunteers must be happy to have their names entered in the PC minutes so that they are then covered by the PC's insurance.

Another part of our role is to actively promote the use and enjoyment of our footpaths in Bealings and this ties in nicely with the weekly walking group run by John and myself, with the support of All Saints church here in Little Bealings. The group has been going for nearly 2½ years now and the Diocese has been kind enough to provide insurance cover for these walks. The walks are free and we have around 12-15 'regulars' who join

us most weeks, plus several other walkers who join us in an occasional basis. We try to run the group on a very friendly, informal basis with many of our walkers enjoying the social aspect of our walks as much as the exercise and fresh air.

Rather than following a pre-planned route each week, we often decide our route on the day according to weather, ground conditions and the number and abilities of our walkers. A lot of our regular walkers come from outside Bealings, including one redoubtable lady with family in this area, who regularly drives up from Chelmsford to join us! We do hold occasional longer walks, usually on a Saturday, at various times of the year such as Christmas, the Historic Churches Trust sponsored walk in September and other occasions, as and when can fit them in. These longer walks are usually around 7 – 8 miles long. Our weekly walks start from All Saints church here in Little Bealings at 10-30 every Wednesday morning throughout the year and everyone is welcome to join us, there's no need to pre-book, just turn up on the day.

For those of you on Facebook, we have our own page under the name of 'Fynn Valley Walks Group' where you will find routes and photos of our walks, along with occasional updates on walks, any cancellations which may be necessary and various other footpath matters.

We are currently working on a series of downloadable and printable route maps featuring many of our favourite walks around Bealings and the surrounding area, which we hope to make available through both the Parish Council and All Saints church websites. These routes are based on the Outdooractive app, which ties in with the Discover Suffolk website recently launched to promote the use and enjoyment of outdoor activities in Suffolk.

We're always happy to share our knowledge and enjoyment of the footpaths in and around the village, so if you have any questions about walking in the area, or spot any problems or improvements which you think could be made to our footpaths, you're welcome to contact us through the Parish Council.