

Stickney Footpaths

Picnic Area

The Hump Back road bridge over the railway line was taken down in 1980 and a new picnic area with toilet facilities for visitors was created in the old goods yard. The site was landscaped with the spoils from the bridge and planted with a wide variety of trees and shrubs with picnic tables placed among them. This has created a natural habitat for birds and wild life although some of the visiting creatures are now rumoured to have very unnatural habits. The only visible remains of the Railway in Stickney is the disused weigh bridge office that actually stands on the side of the original turnpike road and the pair of railway cottages that are still in use, just before the new entrance to the bowling club.

Several people in the village were against the idea at the time; especially the parish council and many of their opinions were noted in the local newspapers. The area stretches five hundred yards from the initial entrance at the main road and follows the line of the old railway track down to the East Fen Catchwater drain. At the far end is a rough wooden bench with the names of Foggy, Clegg and Compo carved into the seat and it's believed to relate to three old gents that resembled these characters from Last of the Summer Wine television series who used to walk regularly along the bank, but sadly two have since died.

Cinder Path

When the railway was built through Stickney a hundred years ago, a new footpath was created along the north side of the track. It became known as Cinder path and started at the main road bridge by a descending flight of wooden steps to the track level and followed the rail line to West Fen Lane level crossing. This path is still maintained and has been used for a ghost walk at Halloween, as the ghost of Duddle's Hill is reputed to roam the area near the bridge.

An old post card shows there was once a stile between The Firs and the old Doctor's house known as The Hollies. A footpath started here and curved to the right passing the Old Post Mill and continued through the fields, where John Houlden a Village cobbler was found dead in 1884, and eventually joined West Fen Lane. The South end of this path disappeared when the railway took the land that it crossed, although the North part from the Cinder path to Noogard Cottage on West Fen Lane has recently been restored with way markers, new stiles and wooden bridges.

The Greenwich Meridian line passes through Stickney close by The Grange at the side of the East Fen Catchwater Drain and continues north through the row of recycle bins outside the Youth Centre on Hall Lane. It follows a line of a disused footpath over the fields behind the Village Hall and passes through the Old Farm Park where its position has been marked with a permanent low brick and slate structure.

Meridian Path

A footpath that starts opposite the village hall with a stile and a way marker, heads south by the side of a farm building and passes through the grass paddock that is owned and rented out by The Stickney Charities, then over a stile and into a field that was once known as Harrison's close. For over three hundred years this piece of land had an historic tithe attached to it and the owner was obliged to pay three shillings and two pence

annually to the poor people of the village. Another path leaving the grounds of the Primary School and heading towards the footbridge over the West Fen Catchwater Drain used to cross here, although that path has since disappeared, and the Holmes Road housing estate has been built over some of it now.

On leaving this field by a stile and a wooden bridge, a farm track immediately on the left leads back to the main road. Still heading south though, the path follows the edge of a field now planted with a small area of Lucerne which is similar to clover and is harvested for animal feed. We now pass by the overgrown end of Simpson Road and join the corner of the field where the Saturday car boot sales are held throughout the warmer months of the year. Crossing the tarmac roadway to Stickney Grange and over a wooden bridge, and bearing slightly to the right, the path now heads towards Grange Farm. It crosses their driveway via two stiles in the hedges and goes diagonally through the paddock at the front of their house. Mary Holmes was once a servant girl at Grange Farm and was later hanged for murdering her husband William Lefley in 1884. The path then joins Pin Fold Lane near to the Grange Bridge on the West Fen Catchwater Drain. This ancient right of way is mentioned in one of Graham and Hilda Heaps books, and follows this precise route as part of the Stickney Greenwich Meridian Trail from Cherry Corner.

Simpson Road

Simpson Road is now mostly over grown with trees and hedges and littered with old farm machinery, but once was an important occupation lane that crossed the footpath mentioned above and lead to land and probably the cottage that was owned by Benjamin Simpson over two hundred years ago. The beginning of this lane is still passable in a motor vehicle and heads west off the main road down to the home where the Greens lived for many years. Teddy Hudson was the market carrier and travelled this road home regularly with his horse and carriers van in the 1930s. There were at least two cottages and other buildings at this time near the drain bank where he and his daughter lived, and for many years the Mackinder family lived in the other one. The only other way to these houses was by a single wooden plank over the drain with a hand rail fixed on one side only. This bridge and all the buildings in the field were demolished during the 1960s

Poppy Alley

Just across the main road from the Church is a wide entrance by the side of Devonport Cottage that is described in an old deed as being a wagon road of thirteen feet wide, when the house on the right was built in c.1810. This common right of way is mentioned in the 1841 census of Stickney and referred to as Poppy Alley. The Post Office telephone exchanged has since been built behind these houses but once white poppies are said to have grown here in abundance for many years.

A finger post now marks this footpath that takes an indirect line, changing direction several times around the edges of the fields now that they are cultivated, before passing over a stile and into a meadow with a dew pond that is now grazed with cattle throughout the summer months. Another footpath joins near the horse chestnut tree and follows a route north to Bar Green. This land once belonged to the School at East Kirkby and several cottages stood in this area until the early c.1960s. The path south from here is now virtually obsolete as the drain bank a little further on is easier to walk along, although a broken stile in the hedge can still be seen and shows the line that the original path followed.

The foot bridge over the East Fen Catchwater Drain was fitted in the summer of 2010 to replace the old timber crossing that would have been used regularly by the families living in the cottages that once stood on the drain bank.

A right of way still continues from here along the south side of a hedge towards Midville Lane and crosses a dyke almost opposite to the old demolished farm where the Holmes family lived for many years. Mr W Mawer owned the steam powered linseed oil and flax mill that once stood on this site and a cast iron pipe was said to have been laid under this footpath to carry water directly from the drain to feed the steam boiler at the mill. A large explosion occurred here in 1870 which started a fire that destroyed much of the farm buildings and most of the stack yard.

Bar Green Lane

Bar Green Lane is an access road to the north of the village where several houses use to stand but only five now remain habitable. The first part of the lane is sometimes known as East Fenside Lane and is maintained for vehicles as far as the campsite and then continues as a grass footpath. The tele-communication mast on the right was erected in the early 1990's in the transport yard once used by R Collier Haulage Ltd. The large fishing lake in the field to the left of the road was excavated about the same time and puddled with clay so as to withhold rain water naturally. During the summer there are two static caravans available for holiday hire and the large grassed area around the field which is well maintained and popular for camping and touring vans throughout the season. Visiting anglers are always welcome and a small rod charge is made for a day's fishing.

From here the footpath continues south passing the rear of St Paul's Farm and another recently extended house on the right with a riding school and stables opposite to them. Before the path deviates slightly left, we pass a thatched mud and stud cottage that was once owned by the trustees of East Kirkby School and now known as Kirkby House. This is a listed building dating from the seventeenth century and probably the oldest dwelling in Stickney to survive virtually in its original condition.

Further along the way we pass a well fenced paddock, usually grazed with inquisitive horses that come to greet you before entering a cultivated field that was once owned by the church but for many years now has been cleared for the production of organic vegetables.

The newly fenced field on the left just before the second stile further along the route was once divided into equal plots with one each for the four families that lived in the terraced cottages that stood at the bottom of the field. There was access to them via a footbridge over the drain and along a farm track leading onto Midville Lane.

Another small cottage once stood just before the wooden bridge that now leads into the picnic site. This would have been guarded by hand gates either side of the line when the railway was operating through Stickney from 1913.

Figtoft Farm

The other side of the picnic area the footpath skirts around an old farm house and the

outbuildings that have been empty and derelict for many years. This is Figtoft Farm and a will from the 1550s states that the owner of the farm had to pay an annual tithe of £1-6s-8d to the Stickney Charities to cover the purchase of a Spinning wheel for any maiden who married in the Parish Church. This tradition still continues today but with a more appropriate gift for the bride.

Following the boundary of the next field we pass behind another derelict cottage that was last inhabited by the Welbourn family in the nineteen fifties, and then close by the site where another two cottages once stood, before joining with the pathway on the right that starts from Poppy Alley. Very near to the last stile we have just crossed, was the home of Robert Burns a wheelwright who is commemorated in the Church as a gifted bell ringer and for many years was a dedicated Church Warden. As mentioned earlier the path south from here, going past the dew pond, is now disused although it once went through the fields and joined Horbling Lane via the access road now used for the sewerage works. It went across Horbling Lane and headed through the fields, going past the side of a house that is still occupied and then past another that has since disappeared. It continued southwards following the edge of a twelve acre field called The Brax where it merged with the footpath from Horbling Lane corner before turning left towards the bank and eventually leading into Leake Fen via a footbridge over the Catchwater drain.

The full length of this path from here back to Bar Green is marked on a map of the area from 1300 and was most likely the extent of the village boundary for many centuries, before the East Fen was effectively drained.

An old water colour of the main road through Stickney shows a stile and a wooden finger post at the corner of Horbling Lane pointing to a footpath heading south east towards the Catchwater drain. This path has disappeared many years ago and hasn't been marked on any local OS maps since 1905. The painting was also lost when the owner died in 1994. Another ancient right of way that is still used frequently leaves the centre of the village, just a few yards down the narrow lane that leads towards the old windmill. It follows the boundary of the field directly behind the Rising Sun Public House and then crosses over a small wooden bridge on the right and heads diagonally over a rough grassed area towards the cream rendered house that stands at the bottom of Green Lane. It skirts around the back of this building and again follows the edge of the field directly behind it. On the right hand side again another stile in the hedge enters a grass field and the footpath heads almost east to join the access road for the sewerage works via another stile. This stile was repositioned here some years ago but was originally in the corner of the field virtually on Horbling Lane.

Daniel Salter's Path

Near to the Hall Lane end of West Fen Lane, a wooden stile and finger post marks the start of a footpath that went between the hedge and a Nissan hut that has recently been demolished. It passes through Eric Maidens property and for many years this was the base for his haulage business. This right of way continues over the stile at the bottom of his yard, and across a field and curves between the back of the farm house and the timber stable block. This house and land until recently was subject to a tithe of ten shillings a year payable to the Stickney Charity, from the will of Daniel Salter. The next field along the route is owned by the church and let for grazing. Once a small farmstead and out buildings stood here where Edward Dodd and his family moved to about 1875

after leaving the Nags Head Inn. Thomas Denton who kept the Bricklayers Arms along the main road in Stickney for twenty five years also lived here for a short while. On leaving this grass field by a wooden bridge and double stile the William Lovell School can be seen to the left. Skirting around the rear of the next house and buildings and entering the neighbouring field, the footpath now bears to the right and eventually reaches the drain bank via a stile in the hedge. The foot bridge here that goes over the Catchwater Drain was often referred to as the Braim Warth bridge, as at the Parish Council meeting in 1900, when major repairs to it became essential. It was eventually replaced when the old one collapsed as a local farmer allegedly took a short cut across it with his horse.

Turning right over the bridge will actually take you out of Stickney and into Freiston Fen Allotment. You'll go past the end of Green Lane and come to the old football field that is now planted with raspberry canes, which borders on to Hall Lane. A complaint was raised at a Parish Council meeting in 1954 that the pathway from Tavern Bridge to the house in Green Lane was being severely cut up by farm machinery and virtually impassable on foot.

Turning left over the foot bridge instead, you can follow the drain right through to Cherry Corner and West Houses. The first part of the roadway is now suitable for vehicles, but was once just a farm track. The original footpath was actually lower down the bank side and is now over grown by the hedge but is still just visible in places. Further along, the tarmac road continues past the private foot bridge that leads to The Grange and eventually turns left to cross the drain. The bridge at this point was rebuilt in 1957 and is now known as Grange Bridge, but it has been referred to several times in the past as Blyths Bridge, twice at different Vestry meetings in 1887 when the booning of the bank from Blyths Bridge to the Braim Warth bridge was raised because of the poor condition of the causeway.

Continuing along the drain bank southwards from here leads to Cherry Corner, where the Mill Drain begins and the two Catchwater Drains join together and head for Boston. It was here one night in 1859 that a local man was viscously murdered and robbed, with the two young assailants later being convicted and hanged for the crime.

Walking from The Grange Bridge and following the grass track on the opposite side of the Catchwater Drain instead will eventually lead to Thorndales Lane. This is not an official way marked footpath along here but it has been used for many years now by hikers and horse riders alike. Thorndales Lane or Thorndales Row as it was once called used to have a beer house known as The Pilgrims Lodge which has since been demolished, but it is mentioned several times in the Stickney History. This lane joins the main road not far from The North Dike Bridge which was once a Turnpike and a very historic part of the parish.

The mention of the name Pinfold Lane doesn't appear in any of the old Vestry books of Stickney despite records of a Pinfold being rebuilt on the old site in 1876 and the election of The Pinder at a meeting in 1799. Although a Rush Lane is referred to several times in the books, and a carpenter was once paid for repairing Rush Lane gate and The Fold in 1790

Blythes Lane is another name that has since disappeared over the years but still remains as the farm track that continues across the main road from Pinfold Lane to the East Fen Catchwater Drain. A large farm once stood near the old brick building part way

down the lane but was demolished in the 1960s. Originally there was a narrow wooden footbridge across the Drain to the farm house in Leake Fen and this was later replaced with a metal and sleeper bridge that is still just standing today.

Many years ago an ancient right of way existed from The Grange Bridge through Low Grounds to The West Houses. During a dispute In 1766 John Whitton was called to swear an affidavit before the members of The Vestry that the people of West Houses truly believed they had always had a common right of way through a green lane to Stickney and no one had ever challenged this right as long as he lived there. Arthur Barber was a relatively new farmer in West Houses in 1890 and was alleged to have placed a lock on the gate to block the movement of carts and wagons over his land, but was ordered to remove it by the Chairman of the Vestry after several complaints about it were received.

Another public right of way begins just over the Taven Bridge in Hall Lane and follows the West Fen Catchwater Drain right through to Hagnaby Lock. The first field has for many years now has been used for growing strawberries and is very busy in the season when people come to pick-their-own fruit. Further along the bank just after the two houses the track narrows to a footpath and the blue brick remains of a demolished bridge show the place where the railway line used to cross the drain until 1970.

The small area of land just after the stile was allotted to the village of East Keal when the West Fen was drained. Originally two houses stood here but now only Musgrave's farm is left. The old brick bridge over the Catchwater drain takes a farm roadway back to West fen Lane, but this is now unsuitable for the large farm machinery of today. It is used regular by ramblers and it is the only vehicle access to the house.

Close by the first tree just past the bridge, the bottom of the drain is reputed to have a very sandy bed and this is where many local children used to go swimming in the warmer months. One of the small out buildings at Musgrave's Farm was sometimes used for a changing room.

This area of the West Fen is Hundleby Allotment and often wild deer can be seen freely roaming here. There used to be several houses and small farms along this part of the bank but none exist now.

Nearer to Hagnaby Lock on the left, is a large pond now virtually surrounded by trees. This is the remains of the old clay pit that was once part of the Hundleby Brick and tile business that appears to have closed in the late 1870s. Some of The workers cottagers once stood nearby down the green lane but no brick or tile makers are listed on the 1881 census.

On the other side of the Catchwater Drain is Lusby Allotment and part of the bank has been deliberately lowered to form a flood plain to take some of the excess water during severe downpours. This was also done to create The Hagnaby Wildlife Area which is a popular place for bird watchers and a haven for many species of wading birds.

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