

## **STEPPING OUT**

### **Rights of Way in the Parish of East Leake.**

This is one of my New Year resolutions. During 2010 I will describe, in The East Leake Times, every footpath and bridleway in the parish of East Leake. There are 27 rights of way within the parish boundaries and each one has an official number. It is useful to be able to quote these numbers if you should want to report a problem.

There is a sheet available from the parish office which gives a brief description of all 27 paths with a sketch map to indicate where they all are.

Most of the paths continue beyond the parish boundary but usually have a different number in the next parish. In this way the neighbouring parishes of West Leake, Rempstone, Costock, Bunny and Gotham can all be reached.

Each month I will describe a walk which will take you along two or three paths to the parish boundary. You then have the option of returning over the same route or continuing your walk in the neighbouring parish. If you follow all the walks during the year you will visit every right of way in the parish. You will get to know your parish a little better and you will continue a tradition that extends back over many centuries.

The paths are called “rights of way” because the public has an absolute right of passage along the path and the landowner must not do anything to obstruct this right. The one exception to this rule is that a farmer may cultivate over a path that crosses an arable field – but not one that goes along the field edge. If the farmer cultivates over the path he must reinstate it so that its route is clearly visible on the ground and he must not let crops grow to more than 4 inches on the path. Farmers are encouraged to drive a tractor along the line of the path so that walkers can walk in the tracks left by the wheels.

You have a right to be accompanied by your dog on a right of way but it must be under close control and on no account must it be allowed to approach farm animals grazing in the field. Cows with calves are particularly sensitive and you should never come between a cow and her calf.

The county council and parish councils share some responsibility for rights of way. There is a scheme called the Parish Paths Partnership (3P's) in which many of the County Council's responsibilities (and finance) are delegated to Parish Councils – the idea being that local people best address local needs. Most of the parishes in the area, including East Leake, participate in the scheme.

Rights of way are classified as footpaths, bridleways or byways. Footpaths are open only to walkers. Bridleways are also open to cyclists and horse riders. Some byways are open to all traffic – e.g. the first part of Lantern Lane. But many byways are “restricted byways” – not open to motorised traffic.

So no motorcycles and 4x4's on restricted byways. There is a very short length of path in East Leake which is not a right of way – it is a permissive path. This means that the landowner has given express permission for people to use the path. However, unlike the case of a right of way, this permission can be withdrawn at any time. You don't know where this is? All will be revealed when I describe footpath no.25.

Jane Baines is the County Council officer responsible for rights of way in this area and she can be contacted on 0115 977 4802 if you meet a problem on any of our paths. Councillor Peter Warren is the parish councillor responsible for the Parish Paths Partnership in East Leake.

Dennis Fox