

## Drove Ways, Footpaths and Fifth Class Roads

**T**here is almost no limit to the descriptive names given to tracks followed by man in this part of England for thousands of year. Once a particular route became favoured because of ease of going, and perhaps relative safety and access to refreshment, it tended to develop an identity of its own with, eventually, its own type of infrastructure.

Although early man has inhabited Britain for several hundred thousand years and 'modern man' for tens of thousands, it was probably not until some three or four thousand years ago that he succeeded in domesticating the horse and so transport more than he could himself carry. Whilst the seasonal droving of animals between pastures was common, the need to move large numbers of livestock from remote breeding areas to markets nearer growing towns encouraged the development of droving routes perhaps 50 feet wide and hundreds of miles long.

Typically, 600 Welsh black cattle or 2,000 sheep would be brought from Wales or the west country by a licensed drover, a horseman, four sidesmen and a few dogs. Routes were often waymarked by evergreen trees and the stopping places, stances, by 'clumps' of trees often close to droving inns known as 'hutts' (as West Meon Hut) with eight acres or so of grazing land and a pond or stream. Remarkably, dogs could be sent home alone, retracing the outward route and stopping places for prepaid food. Drove Ways from Wales and the West Country had a significant node near Alresford and, more locally, near Chalton with feeder routes for markets and fairs at Cosham, Havant, Emsworth and Chichester. Drove Ways fell into disuse with the coming of railways but local names such as Drift Road, live on.

Present day Public Rights of Way, usually unpaved and not intended to carry full motorised vehicular traffic, fall into one of five classifications:

- Public Footpaths (FP) for use only on foot and, where it is possible, disabled people may use a 'mobility scooter' or 'powered wheelchair'.
- Public Bridleways (BW) may be used by horseriders and pedal cyclists.
- Restricted Byways (RBW) may also be used by horse drawn carriages and carts.
- Byways Open to All Traffic (BOAT) allow limited use by motorised vehicles.
- Cycleways are for cyclists and pedestrians, often newly created or adapted from public footpaths.

We have no RBWs locally and only one BOAT, 66A, which begins at Long Copse Lane and becomes BW66B as it passed through Hollybank Woods. There are more BWs near Rowlands Castle and, BW132, the ancient Wadeway to Hayling, at Langstone. There is evidence of its later usage even though, in 1823, it was cut by the Portsmouth & Arundel Canal. This Heritage Site is maintainable by the CC but has suffered much from recent neglect and illegal bait digging.

County Councils are notorious for neglecting their Statutory Duty to assert, protect, maintain and mark our public rights of way. A public path six feet wide all the way from Slipper Mill to Prinsted was granted by the Inclosure Awards. In places it (now FP203/204) has recently been barely two feet wide. When the mandatory Public Footpath signpost at the King Street end of FP76 Dolphin Quay path was reported as in poor condition, Hampshire CC removed the sign and several others as "it is CC policy not to sign urban paths as this would not be an appropriate use of public money".

"Once a Highway, always a Highway", but there are a number of paths locally that are either not yet shown on the Definitive Path Map and Statement or are recorded with lesser rights than they have actually acquired in the course of time. "Fisherman's Walk" or "Westwood's Road" leads southward from Emsworth Public Jetty nearly to Fowley Island. It is now well documented, thanks to the Harbour Conservancy. It was used to access the oyster beds and connected with two useful low tide hards or landing places.

Another curiosity is the ancient, and at one time only, public "Road or Causeway at low water" to Thorney. It is so marked on Yeakell & Gardner's 1778 map and later OS maps. From the east end

of King Street, after fording the Ems the road continued southward and then south-eastward along the foreshore to where the present (but once private) northern part of Thorney Island meets Thomham Lane. From there it continued by way of Eames Island and low tide causeways to West Thorney village. Adoption of northern Thorney Road and major land reclamation in the 1870s facilitated all year dry access to Thorney. Although the now dreadfully obstructed and unlawfully encroached upon Right of Way from the shore to Thomham Lane is presently listed as FP3675, it has been previously recorded as a 'cart track', 'green lane' and even a 'Fifth Class County Road'.

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Sometimes it helps if we are reminded of the true definitions of commonly used words. These are some which might be helpful relating to roads:

- Bridle Path**                    A path suitable for horses and pedestrians and from which vehicles are legally barred. Legislation has tended to make the pedestrian's right to the use of bridle paths stronger than on a footpath.
- Drove Road**                    A road of ancient origin not subject to toll and principally used for long-distance herding of cattle to market towns. It was not usually kept in repair by any authority. Alternatively called a Drift Road.
- Footpaths**                    The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 defines a footpath as a 'highway over which the public has a right of way on foot only.' Maps showing footpaths have to be available to the public at County Council offices. Footpaths are shown on Ordnance Survey maps as lines of red dots. County Councils are able to close footpaths but the extinguishment order has to be approved at government level. Footpaths may be diverted if this leads to better land use; if the termination point is a road this may be altered, but otherwise the termination point must remain as before. Liability for the maintenance of footpaths is often unknown, but parish councils are empowered to do the work.
- Highways Act 1835**            It provided for the unification of parishes into highway district authorities and allowed the employment of a paid district surveyor.
- Highways Act 1862**            This Act empowered the justices to compulsorily unite parishes into highway authorities where they thought it necessary.

(These dictionary definitions were taken from *The Local Historian's Encyclopedia (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)* by John Richardson, (2003)).