

Ansty Footpath Maintenance Report November 2020 – November 2021

Once again, we can report that our entire 6-mile (9.6 km) footpath system remains in good shape, thanks to regular vegetation clearing and trimming by the Ansty Volunteer Footpath Maintenance Group (AVFMG).

This year we began on a pessimistic note with yet another long-drawn-out lockdown stretching into the springtime. However, the vaccine programme gave us great optimism because we could see a way out of having to batten down the hatches to keep the virus at bay. By March, into April we were all collecting our first does of the vaccine.

From mid-March the four-man maintenance team re-convened after the winter and operated in the same socially distanced twosomes first mooted in 2020, looking after designated sections of our footpaths. Working in conjunction with Wiltshire Council we had to ensure that we had assessed the risks when working on the footpaths; checked that no member of the public was in the work area as well as ensuring no harm came to any wildlife creatures. Appropriate measures to minimise the risk of spreading the coronavirus were also taken. Volunteers Mark Norris and Rob Wilkinson generally looked after the smaller footpaths 7,8,9,10,11,12,13, 14 and 15 whilst Jon Gooding and Tim Martin presided over footpaths 1,2,3,4,5 – fewer but often longer and involved much more walking to get to the work venues.

As I have frequently mentioned before, in this last decade particularly, vegetation growth has been phenomenal, and this year was no exception. We had lots of rain in January and February and then a dry March and April. April was notorious for frosts and the spring growth was slow to fire up. May and June became humid and warm and suddenly there was an almighty explosion of 'green growth'! Plenty of work ensued to keep the footpath lines clear and accessible to all! One or two Ansty residents were of the opinion that such maintenance is unnecessary but as we all know to our cost if we don't keep our homes, gardens and vehicles maintained properly things deteriorate rapidly and then far more work and energy is needed to remedy matters.

The AVFMG notched up 62.5 hours clearing footpaths this year – considerably less than the 84 hours of 2020. There were no upgrading projects this year with difficulties in getting supplies and working together in larger groups – but several stiles are beginning to cause concern, either because they are deteriorating or are just plain difficult to access or climb over. After all, many local walkers are not as nimble as they perhaps used to be. These rustic stiles will have to be upgraded within the next year or two and in some cases, it would be preferable to install a gate. It is Wiltshire Council's long-term aim (and ours too) to try and upgrade our footpaths to be 'accessible for all' as indeed it is a countrywide aim for all footpaths and bridleways across the county.

It was again pleasing to note that other people in the parish have also helped to keep our footpaths 'in good trim'. Once again, many thanks to the following for helping maintain our parish footpaths throughout 2021: Tim Martin, Jon Gooding, Rob Wilkinson, Mark Morris, and new man Gray Ayrton

(all AVFMG members); Rob Beale (who kept the footpath on his land beautifully tidy and wins our gold award mark for the second year; Oliver Simm, George Smith, Mathew Feltham, Clive Jack of Squalls, Matt Fry of Totterdale and the Daltons of Horwood. All and more have played their part in ensuring our footpaths remain in a good state of maintenance and accessibility.

As it is Wiltshire Council's long-term aim to try and create improved accessibility for all our very ancient footpaths in Ansty – we are looking at the possibility of enhancing one or two of our meadow and woodland footpaths in the vicinity of Ansty Coombe and 12 Acre Copse. Watch this space!

Before we attempt any of these footpath upgrades, permissions need to be obtained from landowners and we thank all those who see the 'bigger picture' and help us with these improvements. It is not just about the preserving the 'here and now' forever - it is about the 'bigger picture' planning for the future and ensuring that all our footpaths are maintained and readily accessible to anybody – not just the very fit! The covid-19 pandemic and lockdown saw just how important it was that people were able to 'get out' and walk freely across the countryside and there has been evidence that indicate most of our footpaths saw an increased 'footfall' again this year – mostly locals – but also some welcome visitors and more cycling was enjoyed by some along some of the byways and bridleways.

Our more challenging walk (FP5) traversing Ansty Down to Whitesheet Hill from Shave Lane seems to have attracted even more back packers this year and of course our section of the byway along the top of the Downs is a good draw for all – and not just for the fantastic views.

I have said this before, but it still remains very disappointing to see how so few youngsters seem to enjoy any form of 'hiking' in our local area. Once considered a healthy, enjoyable (and free) pastime for kids has now given way to organised (and often expensive) events at a theme park or in an airless unit on some industrial estate or perhaps they are just mooching about with a phone. Maybe the ever-presence of Covid and the desire to avoid airless, crowded hotspots might rekindle an interest in rambling by our younger folk (just for the sheer exhilaration of it) and not just as part of an outward-bound exercise or raising money – very laudable though that it is.

Anyway, here is to happy walking in 2021! Scroll down for pictures and statistics!

Rob Wilkinson, on behalf of AVFMG.

Note: I stand down at the end of this season and leave it all to a great team to carry on the good work we started in earnest back in 2013. My wife and I will be moving to pastures new – but not too far away! We have loved every moment of our time here in Ansty and it has been an exceptional privilege to have met so many assiduous 'Ansty' people. I am certain to be back to walk the walk in the parish on occasions and will carry on operating with the Wiltshire Heavy Gang for as long as I can – maintaining footpaths throughout south Wiltshire.

ANSTY FOOTPATH MAINTENANCE 2021

FP	Dist km	PROBLEM	SOLUTION	DATE COMPLETED	TIME TAKEN (MAN HOURS)	VOLUNTEER LABOUR
1	0.3	Vegetation needs clearing from Access stile off High Street	Cleared vegetation to redefine path	20-04-2021	0.5	TM
			Ditto	16-06-2021	0.5	TM
2	0.5	Winter debris and encroaching side vegetation	Side strimming on steep section; cleared area above top gate; cleared around 1st gate	13-04-2021	1.5	TM JG
			Part cleared	16-06-2021	1.0	TM
		Overgrown vegetation and tidying needed lower section	Lower part cleared and tidied.	25-06-2021	1.0	RW
			Strim cleared and tidied		1.0	TM JG
3	0.5	Access gate needs clearing and tidying	strimmed cleared entrance and access to FP		1.0	TM JG
			Ditto	16-06-2021	0.5	TM
			Strimmed gate access area etc.		0.5	TM JG
4	0.3	Access top and bottom needs attention	Postman's steps cleared at top/bottom		1.0	TM JG
			Ditto	16-06-2021	1.0	TM
			Strim Cleared top and bottom access points		1.0	TM JG
5	1.0	Check all 5 stiles along scarp foot OK	Meadow path and all 5 stiles cleared	Sorry folks; I appear to have accidentally wiped the dates for these 4 sessions!	1.5	TM JG
		Overgrown vegetation everywhere!	Shave Lane and 2 stiles; partly done -out of strimmer wire!		1.5	JG
			Strim clear section from Shave lane to foot scarp stiles		1.8	TM JG
		Entire footpath needs redefining	Strim cleared and tidied entire section		6.0	TM RW
6	0.7	Check FP 6 Access off A30	Landowner has mowed the section twice so far this year!		x	RB
			Access off Shave Lane + Part of Shave Lane	?	1.0	JG
			Access off Shave Lane + Part of Shave Lane	09-10-2021	}	GA RW
			Strim cleared access off Shave Lane	?	0.3	TM JG
7	1.0	Winter Debris on 'holloway' part of footpath	Clear branches and twigs from footpath and a general tidy up	19-03-2021	3.0	MN RW
		Vegetation needs clearing in parts	Cleared vegetation to redefine path	02-06-2021	1.0	MN RW
		Clear access stile near Newbarn End	Strim cleared access stile and cut back hedge to reveal footpath sign	08-06-2021	0.3	RW
		Vegetation needs clearing in parts	Cleared vegetation to redefine path near stile top of holloway	12-06-2021	}	
			Cleared vegetation near stile top of holloway from polo practice field also stile off Ansty Coombe Lane - Newbarn	09-10-2021	4.0	GA RW
8	0.5	Winter debris needs clearing for summer	Clear and establish footpath line from Squalls to AC Lane	15-04-2021	2.0	MN RW

		Vegetation growth at various points from Squalls to above Aileen's bridge	Systematic strimming throughout; access gate cleared on Kings lane; growth checked around footbridge and access to C&G's hayfield cleared	02-06-2021	1.5	MN RW
		Last clearance of the season	Strimmed/tidied from Squalls to AC lane - including all stiles and gates	13-10-2021	1.5	RW
9	0.1	Access off Ansty Coombe Lane needs tidying	Cut back growth and tidied access zone	01-04-2021	}	MN RW
		Both stile access stiles need clearing;	Stile access points cleared and put in trace line across field	08-07-2021	}	MN RW
10	0.6	Winter debris needs clearing for summer	Clear branches and twigs from footpath and a general tidy up	01-04-2021	}	MN RW
		Stile access and pathway needed redefining.	Cleared splay into access stile; checked to end of path; redefined field path		0.5	MN RW
11	0.3	Clear winter debris	Clear branches and twigs from footpath and a general tidy up	01-04-2021	3.0	MN RW
			pathline FP 11 in copse cleared; access stile cleared. (see FP 11 above); Access boardwalk and gate to AC lane cleared.	02-06-2021	1.0	MN RW
		Request to clear line through meadow field	Strimmed path line through wildflower meadow as agreed	20-06-202	}	MN RW
		Summer vegetation needs trimming	FP 11 in 12 Acre Copse section only cleared	08-07-2021	0.2	RW
		FP11 line needs defining across meadow	Used heavy mower to define footpath length; tidying beyond to end.	08-07-2021	}	MN RW
			Used mower to maintain recently defined FP line through meadow	12-08-2021	}	MN RW
		Vegetation needs clearing in parts	Cleared short stretch from TISB77 -stile thro' 12 Acre and then boardwalk to AC lane; removed a couple of small overhanging branches via MN	24-09-2021	}	RW
12	0.4	Winter debris needs clearing for summer	Clear branches and twigs from footpath and a general tidy up	01-04-2021	}	MN RW
		Heavy Vegetation needs clearing in parts	Gate access (AC Lane) cleared; access to 12 Acre Copse/stile cleared;	02-06-2021	1.0	MN RW
		Vegetation needs clearing in parts	Gate access (AC Lane) cleared; access to 12 Acre Copse/stile cleared;	08-07-2021	0.3	RW
		Path needs defining	Cut new path trace through meadow from stile to gate on AC lane	12-08-2021	}	MN RW
		Vegetation needs clearing in parts	Gate access (AC Lane) cleared; access to 12 Acre Copse/stile cleared;	24-09-2021	}	RW
13	0.9	Loss of footpath definition from stile to gate via permissive section	Strim cleared and defined footpath was; cleared access stile off Ansty Coombe Lane.	08-06-2021	0.7	RW
		Loss of footpath definition from stile to gate via permissive section	Permissive section of FP 13 cleared from access stile to Horwood farm track cleared- hard going.	08-07-2021	1.0	RW
14	0.4		Cleared access stile/gates and general tidy	02-06-2021	1.0	MN RW
15	0.1	Some stacked twigs need trimming of access point	Minor trimming and clearance	01-04-2021	0.5	MN RW
		Heavy vegetation opposite Thatchers Cottage; path line disappeared to boardwalk	Major strimming to clear rampant vegetation; access gate cleared; path through field to boardwalk redefined	09-06-2021	2.0	MN RW
		Request to clear line through meadow field	Strimmed path line through wildflower meadow as agreed	20-06-202	3.0	MN RW
		FP15 line needs defining across meadow to stile on FP10; FP 15 past Thatchers cottage overgrown	Used heavy mower to define footpath length; tidying beyond to end. Trimmed back overgrown vegetation past Thatchers Cott.	08-07-2021	4.0	MN RW
			Used Mower to maintain FP lines through Meadow field to Gate and stile at Turner's Copse	12-08-2021	4.0	MN RW
		Vegetation overgrowing along this section	Trimmed access stile and 2/3rd of the path of vegetation	01-10-2021	2.5	RW

	Vegetation overgrowing along this section	Hand trimmed overhanging shrubs and trees and removed cuttings.branches etc. Finished strimming the line a little later.	07-10-2021 13-10-2021	2.0	RW
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16 0.6

17 0.8

18 0.0

FP km 9
Total miles 5.6
length

TOTAL MAN
HOURS 62.5

Footpath Maintenance

Extras

Milestone opp PYO	Took some time finding it!!	24-06-21	0.25	RW
Grips and Gully cleared above Ansty Coombe	Not counting walks to and from!	08-07-21	0.5	RW
After heavy rain end of Sept all Grips and Gullies cleared and dug out.	Not counting walks to and from!	08-10-21	1.5	RW

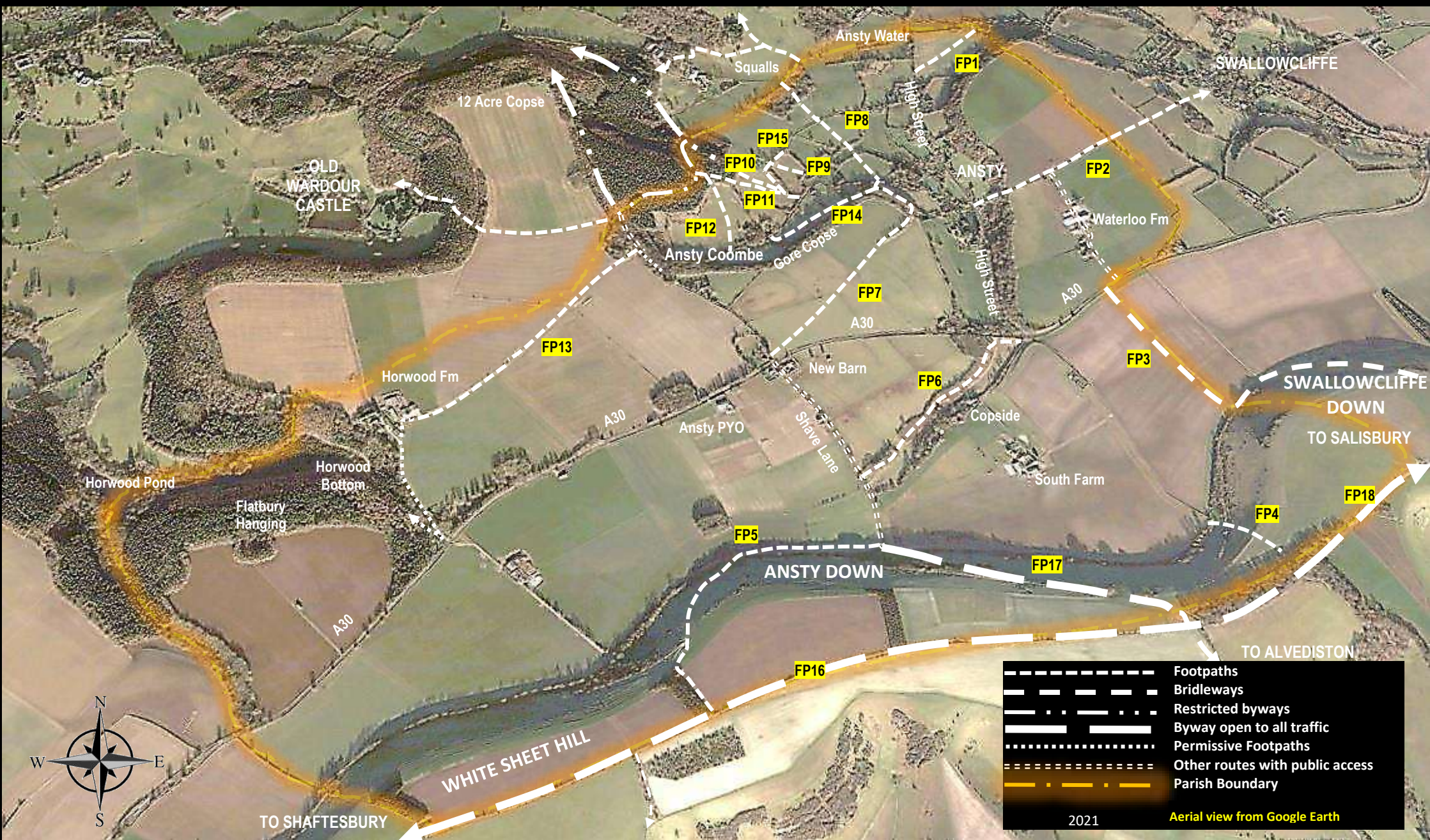


Photo Map to show the many 'public rights of way' footpaths (FPs) in the parish of Ansty, near Salisbury, Wiltshire

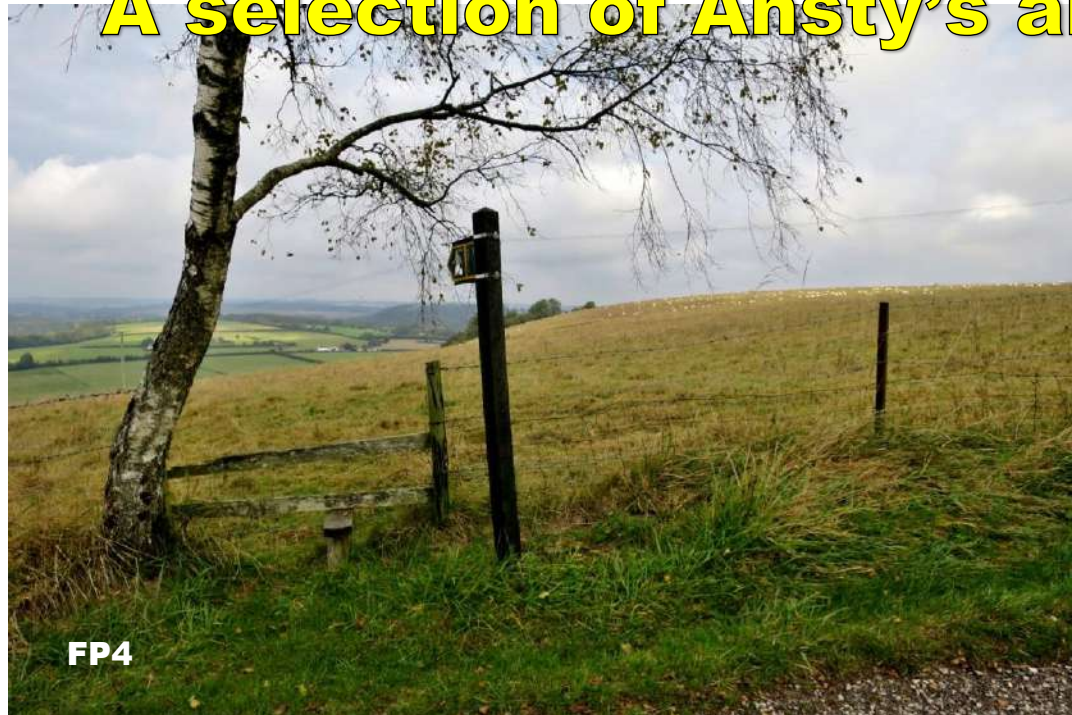


FP2



FP3

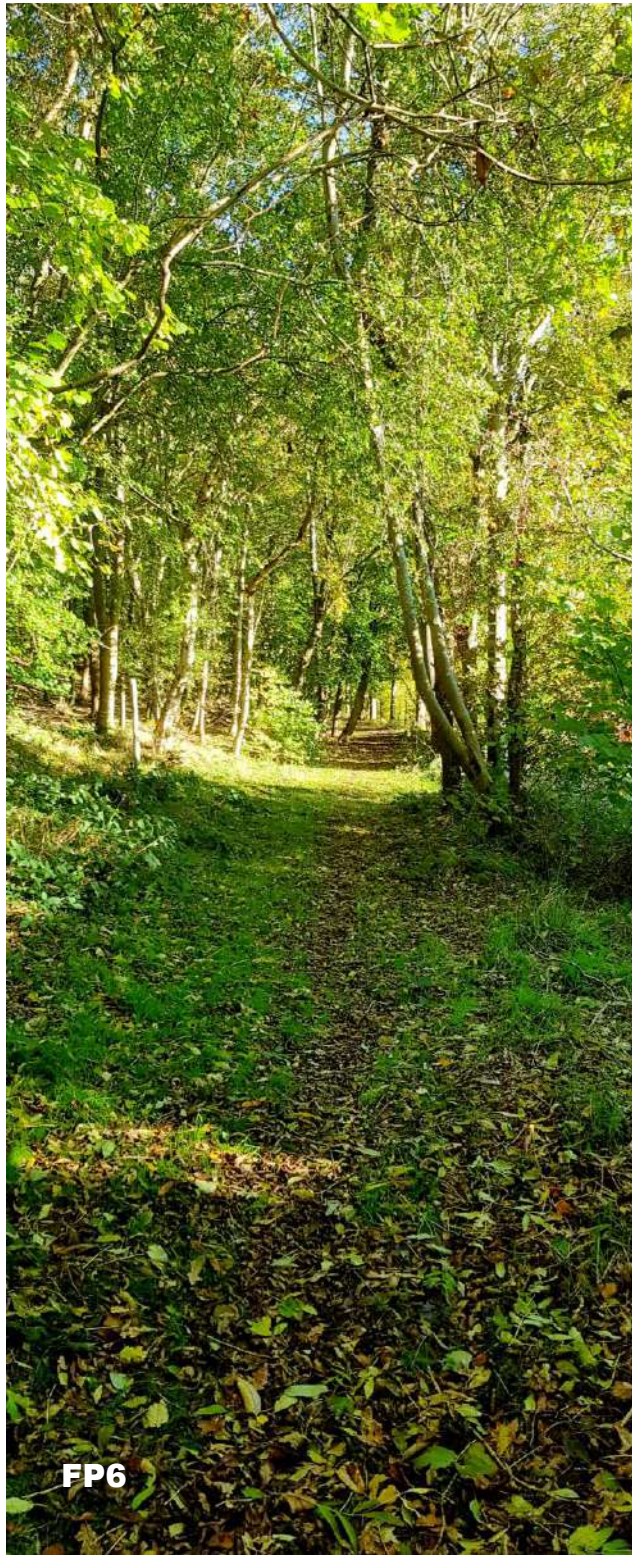
A selection of Ansty's ancient 'rights of way' 2021



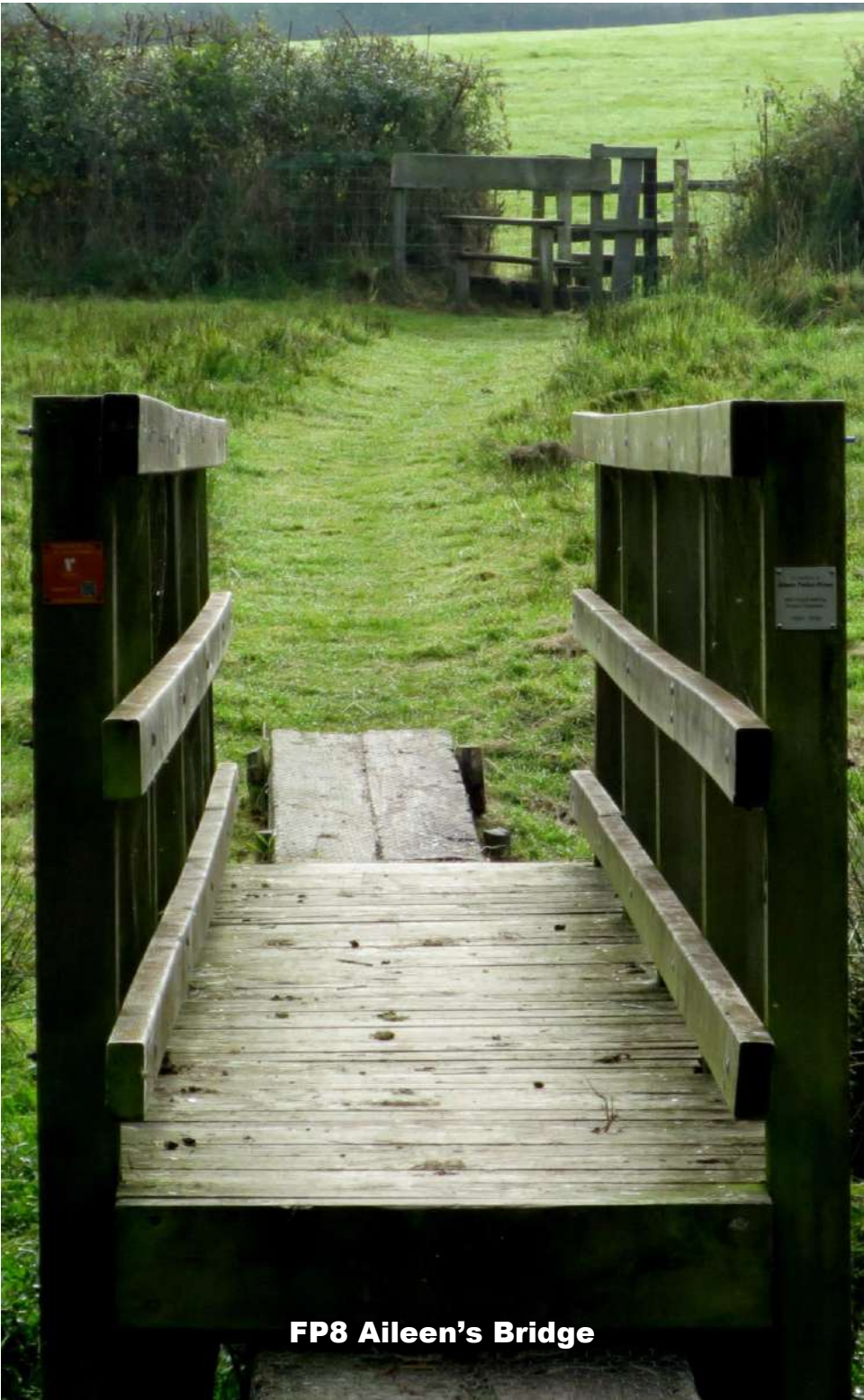
FP4



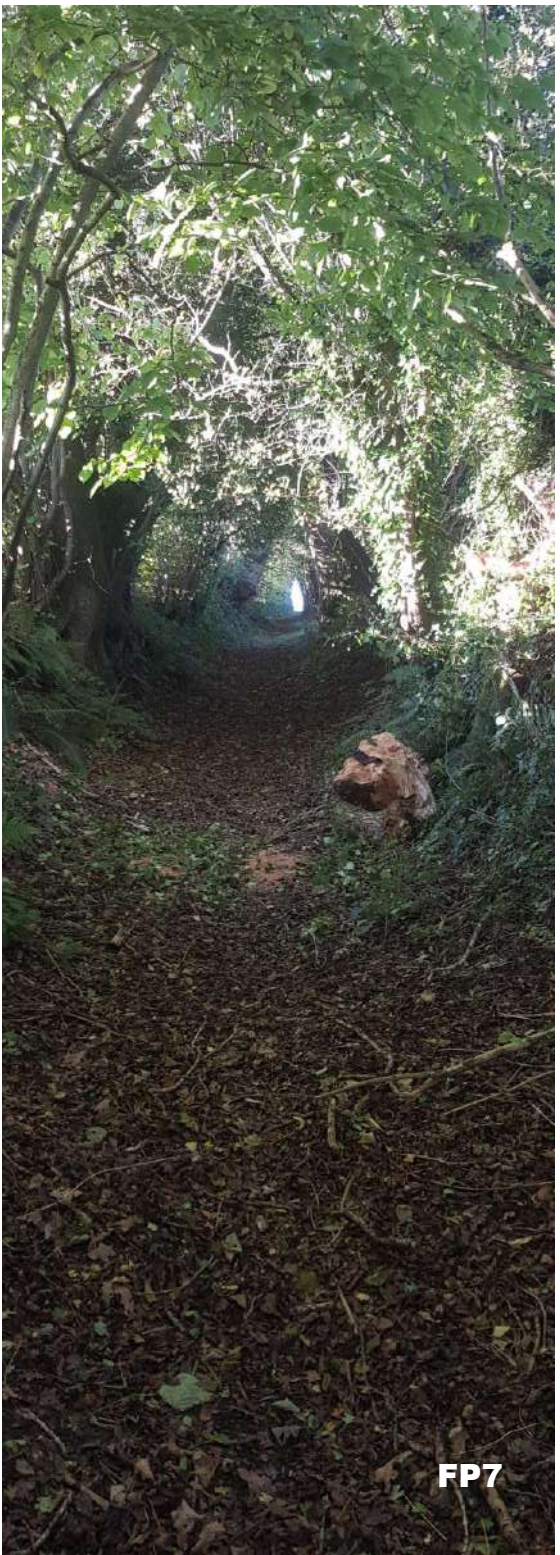
FP5



FP6



FP8 Aileen's Bridge



FP7



**Work done by Ramblers Footpath Working Parties.
South Wilts Group.**

Person hours, excluding travel time, spent on (please amend as appropriate):	
Way-marking	7
Path clearing	309
Stiles	0
Gates	76
Bridge Repairs/Installation	48
Steps	15
Other (please specify) Shoring up/surfacing	21
Sleeper Boardwalk installed	33
Sleeper Boardwalk/Bridge replaced	42
TOTAL HOURS	
Length of paths way-marked	2 kilometres
Length of paths cleared	13.35 kilometres
No. of stiles removed	5
No. of stiles erected	0
No. of gates erected	7
No. of bridges built	1

Total hours for South Wilts: 551 (589 in 2020; 1126 in 2019) Statistics compiled by
Norman Martin

A further extend lockdown in 2021 and restrictions caused by the covid-19 coronavirus
pandemic meant that once again total 'man-hours' worked this year were well down on
recent pre covid years.

**Volunteer Work completed by Ansty Footpath Maintenance Group
Report, Year ended 31st October 2021**

Person hours – spent on:	Hours
Way Marking	0
Path clearing	62.5
Replacement Gates	0
TOTAL HOURS	
Additional Information	
Lengths of paths cleared over the course of a year	Approx. 7km (out of 9 km)
No of stiles removed	0
No of gates erected	0

Total Hours for Ansty: 62.5 hours (11% of SWG total)

Statistics supplied by R Wilkinson