

# Ansty Footpath Maintenance Report November 2022 – November 2023



After another 'warm and humid year' with exceptional vegetation growth from May onwards, our entire 6-mile (9.6 km) footpath system remained in good shape, thanks to regular vegetation clearing and trimming by the Ansty Footpath Volunteer Group (AFVG) with the occasional help from some helpful landowners.

From early-April the volunteer teams were assigned sections of our footpaths to regularly maintain throughout the 'growing' season often working in pairs. In line with Wiltshire Council guidelines, 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 habitats. Our first job was to complete some minor repairs to the boardwalk accessing Aileen's Bridge.

After a relatively wet winter and spring (with a couple of windy days which did bring down some small branches and the odd tree), the early season was dry, sunny and warm there were but damp conditions too which led to a proliferation of vegetation growth – especially grass which took a heavy toll on our strimmers! July and August were wet months but with good sunshine too – followed by an exceptionally warm September with very high temperatures at the beginning of the month.

This 'jungle weather' was not that helpful when endeavouring to keep footpaths cleared of vegetation and undergrowth! Still, there was plenty of work done to keep our footpath lines clear and accessible to all! The AFVG notched up around 65 hours clearing footpaths this year. We were not able to take on any upgrading projects, although several stiles are

beginning to cause concern, either because they are deteriorating, rather wobbly in nature, or are just plain difficult to access or climb over. Some of our rustic stiles will have to be upgraded or strengthened within the next year and in some cases; it may be considered preferable to install gates. It is also Wiltshire Council's long-term aim (and ours) to try and upgrade our footpaths to be 'accessible for all' as indeed it is a county-wide aim for all our footpaths and bridleways.

We were delighted that our maintenance parties have been able to keep our footpaths 'in good trim' and many thanks go to the following for helping us throughout 2023: Tim Martin, Jon Gooding, Max Hobbs, Tom Rowley, Oliver Simm, and Hannah Hoare. Other notable contributions include landowners/farmers Rob Beale (who keeps the footpath on his land beautifully tidy) and wins our gold award for the fourth successive year; Trevor Marks, George Smith, Mathew Feltham, Clive Jack of Squalls Estate, Matt Fry of Totterdale, the Daltons of Horwood and not forgetting young George Price from Ansty PYO. All and more have played their part in ensuring our footpaths remain in a good state of maintenance and accessibility.

Before we attempt any footpath upgrades, permission has to be obtained from landowners and the team thank all those who see the 'bigger picture' and help us with enabling everybody to 'get out' and walk freely across the countryside. Evidence continues to indicate that most of our footpaths saw an increased 'footfall' again this year (aided by spells of fine warm weather) – mostly used by locals – but also some welcome visitors. Cycling was enjoyed by some along some of the byways and bridleways too.

Our more challenging walk (FP5) traversing Ansty Down to Whitesheet Hill from Shave Lane continued to attract back packers this year and of course along our section of the byway from Salisbury to Shaftesbury along the top of the Downs.

Here is to happy rambling in 2024! Scroll down for pictures.

**Mark Norris**, on behalf of the AVFMG.

14-11-2023



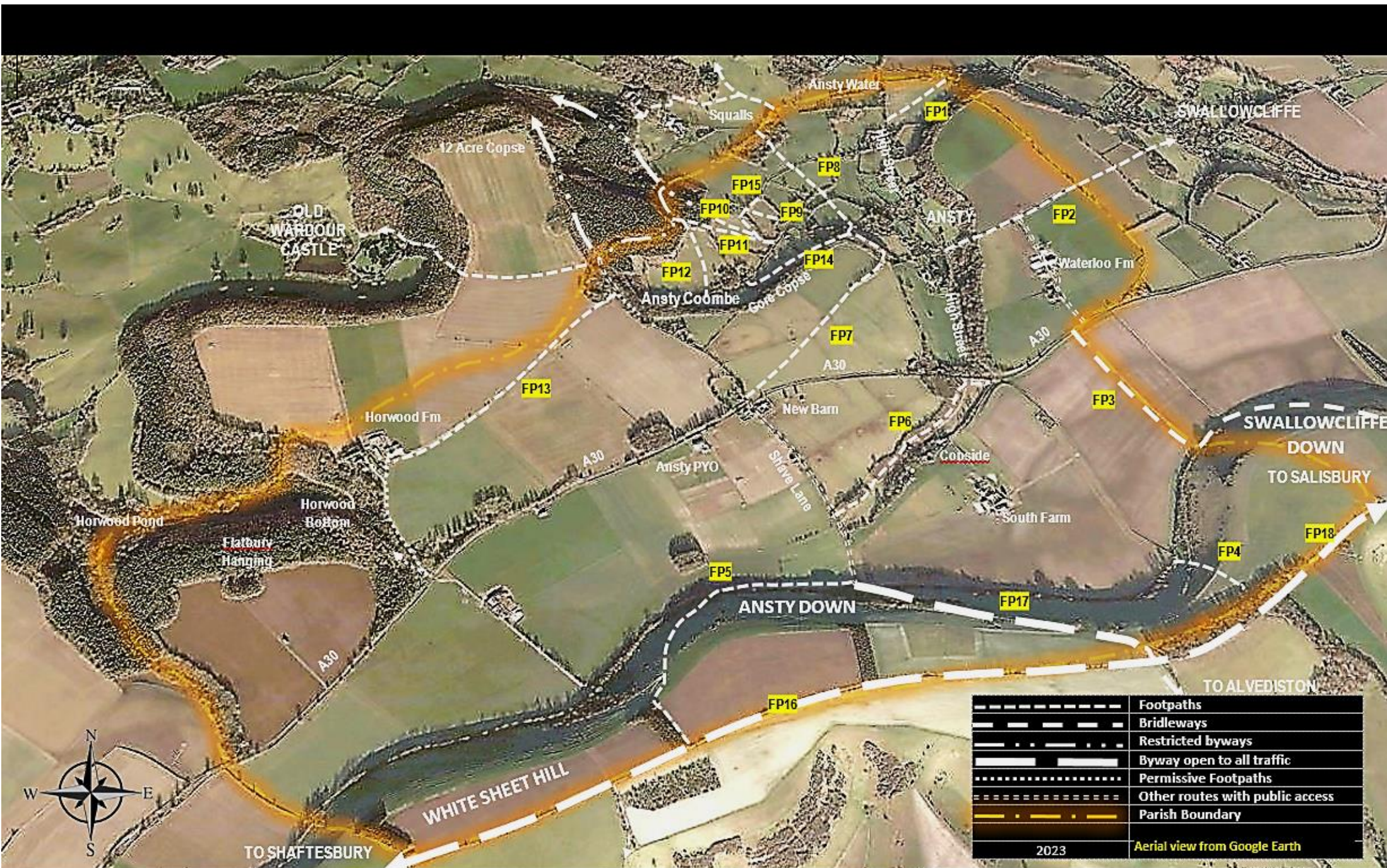


Photo Map to show the many 'public rights of way' footpaths (FPs) in the parish of Ansty, near Salisbury, Wiltshire



# A snapshot of our Footpath Maintenance efforts in Ansty this year!



## **New Farm Fence blocks off access to right of way ANST4** (posted 14th February 2023)

One of Ansty's secret footpath gems is the short (but initially very steep) path that ascends to a chalk escarpment slope up to the top of the hill to Alvediston and the byway crossing it. Recently a new farm fence has been erected blocking off access to this delightful walk. We feel sure that this problem is only temporary, and the Parish Council is taking steps to rectify the issue.

## **Minor Repairs completed on Boardwalk to Aileen's Bridge** (posted 09th April 2023)



Parishioners may recall that some minor repairs were needed to the wooden post structural side supports of the sleeper boardwalk on the access sides to Aileen's Bridge on FP8 from Kings Lane. It seems probable that frost heave caused by very frosty spells in December and January may have been the cause of the problem.

You may be pleased to know that these repairs have now been completed. Wiltshire Council, courtesy of Footpath Officer Alex Howson supplied new wooden pegs and nails etc. and councillors Mark Norris and Tim Martin (part of the Ansty Footpath Maintenance team) did the work. Many thanks to all.



**Above far left-** Old pegs have been removed; Mark Norris knocks in new support pegs side pegs ready to be nailed to the sleeper boardwalk. **Above middle and right-** Job completed for both access boardwalks. Excellent work!





## Ansty Footpath Maintenance Team are back!

(posted 02-06-23)

After the clearance of winter debris, early summer is the time for the explosive growth of vegetation! The Ansty volunteer group, marshalled by Councillor Mark Norris have been busy keeping our wonderful array of footpaths open and accessible to all. They are responsible for clearing vegetation as well as maintaining the gates and stiles.

This array of pictures shows work in progress. Can you identify the footpath locations (A to L) with the path numbers on our photomap above?





## Ansty Village Footpath Maintenance Team – late summer ‘sweep’!

(posted 01-09-23)

All through the spring and summer you may come across very small groups of men doing their best to tame nature’s excesses, so that people can walk through the countryside without too much difficulty. -Any person can volunteer, but it does often involve the use of machinery. -Tap on the image to see how they have been faring more recently.

