

Parish of Worth Matravers and Harmans Cross

Rights of Way Liaison Officer's Annual Report 2013/14

1. **Priest's Way Project.** In last year's report I mentioned a proposed project to improve surface conditions and signage along the Priest's Way, to the benefit of users in Worth Matravers, Langton and Swanage communities. Excess rainfall in the previous winter exacerbated the effects of inadequate maintenance, resulting in severe rutting and waterlogged conditions, making parts of the PW difficult to use and causing walkers to avoid it.
2. A proposed project to drain and repair several of the most damaged sections of the PW received support in principle from many local businesses and voluntary organisations, and from individuals at parish consultation events.
3. Langton PC, with the assistance of DCC and the National Trust, and with support from Worth PC and Swanage TC, successfully applied for £150k funding for the project from the "Paths for Communities" scheme, a European fund which is administered by Natural England.
4. In October –December 2013, DCC, with contractors, implemented a substantial project to deliver improved drainage, re-surfacing and signage along the length of the PW, including around Eastington in Worth parish. Local stone was used for all repairs. The Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust funded new signage. A Priest's Way leaflet and website have been developed, featuring attractions and businesses in Worth Matravers.
5. The work on the PW was immediately tested by a second consecutive very wet winter. The new surface and drainage stood up well to the test of exceptionally wet conditions. At the same time, the repaired surface has quickly re-gained a natural appearance. Both local people and visitors are again enjoying use of this ancient track.
6. **Other Matters.** Wet weather took its toll on RoW, with significant impact in the wider locality. Landslips caused prolonged closure and diversions around sections of the SW Coast Path including a section below Hounstout, and diversions around a much-used path between Spyway and Dancing Ledge [both stretches of path still closed at this point.]
7. **New DCC Contact.** Worth and neighbouring parishes have a new DCC Footpath Officer, Tom Bennett, who is responsible for both the SW Coast path in this area and for other RoW.
8. **Thanks.** I should like to thank all those responsible for maintaining our local ROW for their prompt and helpful response when problems have arisen, including: Rob Field of Weston Farm, Derek Haddon of Suttles Quarries, and Jonathan Kershaw of the National Trust.
9. I thank the PC, parish clerk and all members of the community for their continuing interest and support in parish footpath matters.

Sandra Brown

Rights of Way Liaison Officer, Worth Matravers and Harmans Cross Parish

March 2014