





# A Guide to our Rights of Way in Steeple Bumpstead

£1.00 when purchased  
(all proceeds go to local footpath maintenance)

Prepared by the Parish Footpath Group and first published for Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council Spring 1992; this version published Autumn 1993. Produced with assistance from Essex County Council 'Ways through Essex', Parish Paths Partnership Scheme, and the Essex and Suffolk County Councils' Stour Valley Project.

 In and around the parish of Steeple Bumpstead there are numerous public rights of way which follow a variety of interesting routes: across open farmland, by stream and brook, through woodland—and by stately home! Many of these routes offer circular walks into the neighbouring parishes of Helions Bumpstead, Sturmer, Hempstead or Birdbrook and back; often a path may provide a link with the past, or offer opportunities to observe wild life deep into the countryside away from the roads.

It is not unusual to see fox and deer, especially early in the morning and during late evening; in the spring-time, cowslips seem to be making a come-back along headlands; by hedgerow and in woodland a variety of flora and fauna can be observed throughout the seasons. It is quite possible to walk for several miles along many routes with only a few yards of road walking.


 **Rights of way: rights and responsibilities.** The map in this leaflet shows the rights of way as shown on the Definitive Map or on more recent diversion orders; rights of way can be checked with the Parish Footpath Representative (*see below*). Page 4 of this leaflet provides notes of interpretation for this map. **The Steeple Bumpstead Circular Walk is also shown—a separate guide is available for this.** Most of the paths are way-marked and many are well-walked. As many paths as possible should be used throughout the year, and in order to maintain the full benefit that they can offer the community they need to be walked frequently and with care.


**Remember—whilst we have rights as walkers, we also have responsibilities...**

We should respect the Country Code—keep to the path; keep dogs under control; take litter home; and *never* picnic on paths in private land!

**...and farmers and landowners have rights and responsibilities, too.**

At the same time the law requires landowners to ensure that the rights of way are not obstructed. Generally, the landowners in and around Steeple Bumpstead co-operate well in the maintenance of the rights of way, but if you come across a path that has been ploughed and not reinstated, or some other obstruction, please let the Parish Footpath Representative know exact details, including the map reference of the location. A summary of rights and responsibilities is given on page 3.

 **Adopt a path?** Why not adopt a path or a section of path? All this need really mean is to report any problems—but we are always looking for physical help to keep ways clear, especially in the growing season. Join us on the village walks—often on Boxing Day, Easter Monday, Spring Bank Holiday, or August Bank Holiday. On other occasions we have longer rambles. Take family and friends—your visitors to the village—whenever you feel like a breath of fresh Steeple Bumpstead air.

**and Walks and rambles.** 


☆ If you have any queries, want to report any problems or inspect the Definitive Map, contact the Footpath Representative—Steve Leverett, on Steeple Bumpstead 730617—or any member of the Footpath Group (see Parish notice boards). ☆

## Historical paths ....

Most of the rights of way around the parish are based upon footpaths that have been used for many years—in some cases for many centuries. They continue to link up communities and settlements across the parish, and beyond. Many of these settlements themselves originate from pre-Conquest times, and possibly from the pre-Roman era.



We know from the *Domesday Survey* of 1086 that many manors were thriving in the parish at the time of **Edward the Confessor**. His wife, **Queen Edith**, owned much of the area up to the *Conquest* of 1066: hence the name of *Queen Edith Drive* on the Churchfields estate. We know, for example, that what is now **Moyn's Park** was settled by 12 freemen in 1086 and that a water mill operated in the village at that time. **Devil's Grove** has an association with the *Knights Templar* during the 13th century; in 1381, what is now **Garland's Farm** was attacked as part of the **Peasants' Revolt** of that year. **Bloody Pightle**, to the east end of the parish, was a place of execution in times past. Footpaths pass adjacent to all of these locations, and by many others that have historical associations, some up to the present century. *Windmills*, for example, were sited up to the early part of this century at **Suckling's Yard** behind *Ancient House*, **Mill House** along the Haverhill road, and at **Mill Farm**, along *Wilding's Lane* (formerly called *Mill Chase*).

Hand-painted maps for framing and display, providing some detailed historical information about the village, may be purchased through the Parish Footpath Representative.

 **Flora and fauna.** A variety of plant and animal life can be observed from the paths—along hedgerow and wayside, on river bank and deep in woodland. Take care not to stray off paths, and **never pick wild flowers!** **Lesser grape hyacinth**—similar to bluebell—will be seen in *Devil's Grove* in the spring: the seeds of this plant, which are slightly poisonous, are dispersed by ants; it was at one time used as an ancient medicinal cure for liver disorders. Another old medicinal plant which appears to be making a come-back is the **cowslip**—or 'peagle'. After an absence for a number of years, these flowers are re-appearing in the spring-time. According to *Culpepper* (who lived in the early 17th century), cowslip ointment 'taketh away spots and wrinkles of the skin, sun-burnings and freckles, and adds beauty exceedingly.' Many other species and varieties can be seen in the hedgerows, along ditches, in woodland, and by wayside and footpath: take your book on wild flowers with you when you walk in the spring and summer months!

**Deer** roam freely across the north and west Essex countryside, and the **muntjac, roe** and **fallow**, can be seen in the fields around the village as they venture out from their hideaways in Hempstead Wood. **Fox** is not uncommon, and **rabbits** proliferate in burrows that run along ditches. **Hare** can be seen running across fields during the spring, but no sighting of badger has been made in the area in recent years. The **pipistrelle bat** is clearly evident at dusk in the summer months, darting low along the *Bumpstead Brook*, collecting up tiny insects. Along the *Brook* also come **kingfisher** and **heron**. Amongst the variety of other bird life that can be seen all over we may sometimes spot **sparrow hawk**—or perhaps **kestrel**. At dusk and in the night, the ghostly appearance of the **barn owl** might be seen: certainly, its equally ghostly *shriek* will be heard, especially in the dark autumn and winter evenings; occasionally we might hear the **tawny owl**, with its more familiar *too-wit-too-woo!* Who has spotted the **jay** around woodland or along wayside?

If you see anything unusual—or anything of general interest—why not write a brief report for the *VEG Newsletter*? Are you and your family members of VEG—the Village Environmental Group? There is always a welcome for new members.

 **The landscape.** The undulating landscape around Steeple Bumpstead—based on 'drift' chalky boulder clay that lies across the area—can be appreciated from a number of vantage points. The village itself nestles in a relatively steep river valley, and a good impression of the landscape can be obtained from the footpaths at a number of points indicated on the map by . Whilst much of the hedgerow and woodland has been removed by farmers over the past twenty or thirty years, a recent increase in tree-planting on some land is evident. Looking at older maps, it can be seen that in years past there were many ditches that have since been filled in and replaced with underground drainage. This explains why sometimes a footpath passes across a vast open field—it may have originally followed ditch or hedgerow that has long since been removed. Other cross-field paths are simply original routes taken as short-cuts by villagers and farm workers during earlier times. Fossils from life some 200 million years ago—distributed by glaciation from adjacent *Cretaceous* chalk rock—can be found in the fields; the '**Devil's Toenail**' (*Gryphea* oyster) is fairly common—almost 'Jurassic'!

## A summary of the law, rights, responsibilities, and the Country Code

Our rights of way throughout the parish are **public footpaths**—which means they are for walking, and not for horse riding or cycling! However, you can—

- take a pram, pushchair or wheelchair, if practicable;
- take a dog (on a lead or *under close control*);
- take a short route round an illegal obstruction, or remove it sufficiently to get past.

The **Rights of Way Act, 1990**, clarifies the law relating to ploughing and cropping of

public footpaths. Its main points are:-

- The surface of headland paths must not be ploughed or disturbed.
- If a path runs across a field, the farmer is allowed to plough or disturb the surface when cultivating the land, but he must carry out restoration work. This must be done within 14 days for the first disturbance in a season, then within 24 hours thereafter.
- In the case of cropping, cross-field paths should be kept clear to 1 metre, and headland paths to 1.5 metres.

Wherever you go in the country, follow—

# The Country Code:

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work.
- Guard against all risk of fire.
- Fasten all gates.
- Keep dogs on a lead or under close control.
- Keep to public paths across farmland.
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls (whenever possible).
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone.
- Take litter home.
- Keep all water clean.
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees.
- Take special care on country roads.
- Make no unnecessary noise.





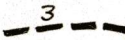


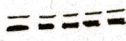
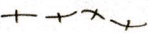










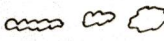

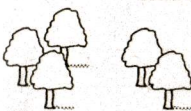


## Know your route



Make sure you know your route! Most of the paths immediately around the parish are clear, but always be certain that you are following a right of way. Whilst we've never had to send out a rescue party yet, sometimes it is not too difficult to become disorientated—especially on longer walks; children and older people can become tired, too!

### The footpath map: legend and notes.

Information: Noticeboard 	Field name <i>Shortlands</i>
Public road 	Building as landmark  Church 
Right of Way: Footpath  (with footpath number)	Walks from the village { Longer  Shorter 
Footpath along private drive or track 	Parish boundary  Viewpoint 
<b>(NOTE:</b> When walking along a drive-way, please keep to one side only and do not occupy the whole width of the way)	
Informal diversion ...: 	Bridge  Gate  Stile 
Access to Right of Way from public road (Usually signed) 	Deer  Other wild life 
Ditch, fence, stream, or other boundary 	Wild flowers 
Hedgerow or bushes 	Tree 
Wood or spinney 	

(Map and Notes copyright © Steve Leverett, 1992)