

Gayton Footpath Survey 2008

The Parish of Gayton has 17 footpaths and 1 bridleway, with a total length of just over 14 kms, as measured on the Rights of Way Definitive Map dated 1st July 2005. During November, John Shaw and I, between us, walked all 18 Rights of Way and our report follows, with suggested action points highlighted in **bold**. The last survey of all our footpaths was carried out in May and June 2004 by members of the Gayton Environment Action Group. Some of the action points recommended in that report have been dealt with, but many have not and are repeated below, together with a few new ones.

RL1 – Walked 14/11/08. Runs from Bugbrooke Road north to the railway crossing at Banbury Lane and is 1300 metres long. There is a footpath sign on the north side of Bugbrooke road after the last house, (but some new “affordable housing” is now being built after the footpath.) The path goes from the road through a gap in the hedge and then runs due north to the left of the hedge, on a grassy verge on the right edge of the field, *although the Definitive Map still shows the right of way running along the right side of the hedge in the adjoining field – this anomaly was reported in our 2004 survey.*

At the end of the field, the path goes through a gap in the hedge to the right and onto a track (Park Lane), which continues straight ahead. There is a footpath sign here. It's a wide grassy track between 2 hedges. After about 200 metres, the left hedge ends, but the right one continues for another 400 metres. From this open hilltop there is an extensive view across the valley to Bugbrooke and beyond. At the end of the right hedge, the path continues across a cultivated field, bending a few degrees to the left. It is well marked. It runs steeply downhill to a hedge, then through a gap into a grassy field, from where you look down to Banbury lane, the main railway line, the Grand Union Canal and the new road bridge (opened March 2005) that spans both the railway and the canal. *The Definitive map of 1/7/2005 is out of date, because it still shows the old road layout of Banbury Lane with the level crossing.* From this point the path runs down the right side of the hedge to a stile leading onto the new bridge. A footpath sign is next to the stile – “Footpath to Gayton”. An arrow marker points to the right, over the bridge, but in fact this is the end of RL1.

Action: update the map to show the new Banbury Lane bridge.

RL2 – Walked 14/11/08. Runs from Park Lane north down to Wrights Lane just before the railway bridge and is 850 metres long. The path begins at the junction of High St and Dean's Row and goes along Park Lane to the end house on the right. Here it goes right down a grassy and often very muddy path with a hedge on either side. There is a footpath sign in Park lane pointing down this path. After about 200 metres a metal gate leads into a triangular shaped pasture on the hillside.

The path continues down the right side of the field passing close to the sewage works away to the right. At the bottom of the hill a brand new foot bridge, with a stile on the near side and arrow markers, spans a stream and hedge and leads into a cultivated field. The correct route of the path is straight across the field to the far corner. *However the path is not marked, and it is easier to walk around the left edge on a grassy verge. Access into Wrights' Lane is through a rusty gate which is not attached to either post, so falls over when you try to open it. In Wrights' Lane a footpath sign is in the hedge a few yards to the right of the gate. It has an elder tree all around it and is barely visible. Next to the sign is a stile, completely overgrown and inaccessible.*

Action: clear the sign in Wrights' Lane.

RL3 - Walked 15/11/08 by John Shaw. Runs from Wrights Lane NE towards Rothersthorpe and is 950 metres long. The path commences at a farm gate on the right hand side of Wright's Lane about 50 metres from the Milton Road.

The signpost "Footpath to Rothersthorpe", situated at the gate, is leaning and a little askew. Through the gate is a paddock, which has a stile about 100 metres away at the far left-hand corner. This leads to a second paddock, across which, at about 100 metres, is a swing gate leading to a large field. The footpath is shown on the map as crossing this field diagonally downhill to a stile but on the day of the walk, there was no sign of this, as new crops were being grown. The field can be traversed by walking down the side of the paddock and turning left along the side of the field, with the hedge on the right-hand side. At the fence between this and another large field bordering the railway line, is a stile, the footboard of which is beginning to rot and break away.

The footpath down this second field is not visible, presumably owing to lack of use, but it is a gentle downhill walk to the bridge over the railway. This bridge has a farm gate but no stile. About 50 metres further on is a bridge over the Grand Union canal, which has both a farm gate and a stile.

From here the footpath follows the line of a hedge, to the right-hand side, and after about 250 metres ends at a copse. A left turn for a few metres leads to an opening and a solidly-built wooden bridge over a small stream, leading to footpath LA4 to Rothersthorpe.

Action: Not urgent. Straighten and orientate the signpost at the start of RL3. Replace the footboard on the second stile.

RL4 – Walked 17/11/08. Runs from the Pumping Station on Milton Road north towards Rothersthorpe and is 360 metres long. *There is no footpath sign at all on Milton Road.* There was an old style wooden one, at the time of the 2004 survey, but it has vanished. Access to the path is through a wide gap in the hedge and a wide grassy path runs along the left side of a cultivated field, with a ditch and hedge to the left. At the end of the field, in the bottom corner is a brick barn and the path goes right then left around it, to a stile in the hedge, where arrows point across the next field to Rothersthorpe and back to Milton Road.

Action: Replace missing footpath sign on Milton Road.

RL5 – Walked 17/11/08. Runs from Milton Road east to Blisworth Arm and is 380 metres long. There is an old style wooden footpath sign on Milton Road, pointing down across the cultivated field towards Blisworth Arm. *The path is not marked at all* – perhaps because it is not much used and was closed for a period in 2006. At the bottom of the slope is a stream spanned by a wide grassy bridge. The path continues in the same direction to the canal at Blisworth Arm, where stone steps lead up onto the canal bank and the Blisworth boundary. *There is no footpath sign or arrow marker here.*

Action: Reinstate the path. Footpath sign or at least an arrow marker required at the canal end.

RL6 – Walked 17/11/08. Runs from the Limes on Milton Road east to railway bridge and is 460 metres long. There is a footpath sign on Milton Road and access to the path is through a new wood swing gate. A grassy path runs downhill, with the high railway fence to the left

and the Limes boundary fence on the right. At the bottom of the slope a wooden footbridge spans a stream. From here the path goes across the left edge of a grassy pasture to steps and a handrail leading up to the road and the railway bridge. At the bottom of the steps a sign reads “Project carried out by the Ramblers, working with Northampton County Council, improving access to the countryside.”

No action required.

RL7 – Walked 6/11/08. Runs SSE from Blisworth Road, just after the dismantled railway past Gayton Wood Farm to the A43 dual carriageway and is 900 metres long. *The footpath sign reading “Public Footpath to Blisworth” has been uprooted and is lying out of sight in thick undergrowth on the railway embankment. The stile leading onto the path is overgrown and inaccessible.* However access is afforded through a double iron gate, secured with a piece of cord.

The path crosses a triangular shaped pasture to the top left corner, where a recently built stile is set in a gap in the hedge. On the other side of the stile RL9 goes off to the right towards the railway. There are several arrow markers, fitted to the stile. The path now crosses a cultivated field, down hill to the road, through a wide gap in the edge and on the other side of the road it continues along the track that leads to Gayton Wood Farm. *At the time of walking, the field had been fairly recently ploughed, but the path had not been reinstated. Arrow markers are fixed to a telegraph pole next to the gap in the hedge, but one points the wrong way, i.e. to the left instead of straight ahead across the road. A footpath finger post is in place, set in the hedge, but is overgrown and almost invisible.*

The path continues up the track, between 2 large ponds and immediately after the pond it goes left over a stile into a grassy pasture. The path is now heading almost due east across the pasture to a gap in the far hedge. A stile leads to steps going down to the A43. There is a gap in the central barrier for pedestrians to cross to the other side where more steps lead onto the RD10 footpath to Blisworth.

Action – on Blisworth Road, recover the finger post and put it in place, clear the stile and make it accessible. Correct the direction of arrow marker on telegraph pole. Clear the finger post near Gayton Wood farm and make it visible. Reinststate the path over the ploughed field.

RL9 – Walked 4/11/08. Runs from west to east from Gayton Wilds house and is 430 metres long. The footpath finger post is in place opposite the entrance. From the road, the path follows a hard track that runs between Gayton Wilds House on the right and 2 new stone houses left. The track continues up to a third new stone house, but the path bends right behind Gayton Wild House and runs between 2 wooden fences towards the dismantled railway. There are arrow markers on the right hand fence and just before the railway is a marker post with an arrow marker.

Just after RL10 runs in from the left the path crosses the railway over a wide bridge with brick walls either side. The railway is in a deep cutting some 30 to 40 feet below. On the other side of the bridge is an open wooden gate, with 4 arrow markers on the left gate post. After the gate the path runs along the grassy verge of a cultivated field on the right, with a hedge on the left. At the end of the hedge, the path runs into RL7 and ends. On the left, set in the hedge is a recent stile with several arrow markers.

Action – fix arrow marker where path bends right behind Gayton Wilds House.

RL10 - Walked 4/11/08. Runs north south from far end of Britain's cottages to junction with RL9 and is 420 metres long. An old style wooden footpath finger post is in place opposite entrance to path. An arrow marker shows the entrance. A mown grassy path runs along the side of the garden of last Britain's cottage, with fences on both sides. To the left is a paddock. At the end of the garden, a just about adequate stile leads into a cultivated field. The path runs along the grassy left edge of the field. After the paddock on the left ends, the path has a high hedge on the left beyond which is the dismantled railway. At the end of the cultivated field, the path goes through an opening in the hedge and ends at the junction with RL9, where several arrow markers are in place.

No action required.

RL12 – Walked 12/11/08. Runs from Eastcote Road, behind Westgate House to Goggs Farm and back to Eastcote Road at The Old Wilds and is 1300 metres long. From Eastcote Road, just before Westgate House, the path is wide and grassy, has been recently mown, and runs between 2 hedges. After about 500 metres, the path bends left and an overgrown stile set in a clump of trees leads into a cultivated field.

The path follows the left edge of the field to another stile that leads into a paddock. It continues with a fence and hedge to the left across to a wood gate, leading into another paddock, which you cross to another wood gate, then cross a 3rd paddock at the end of which the path crosses to the other side of the fence via a stile. There is an arrow marker here. It continues between the fence on the right and the hedge on the left to Goggs farm drive, the main farm gates and the junction with RL17. *The hedge is overgrown and there is very little gap between the fence and the hedge, making the path almost inaccessible.* It is however possible to walk along the right side of the fence, inside the grounds of Goggs Farm. There is an arrow marker where the path crosses the drive, pointing back.

After crossing the drive, the path is blocked by a wooden fence with just 2 rails, which you have to duck under or climb over to enter a large grassy field. There is no arrow marker and no gate or stile here. The path runs along the left edge of this field, with a hedge to the left. After about 150 metres, the path goes through the hedge – there is an arrow marker and *an overgrown stile, so access is difficult* – and on the other side you cross the corner of the field to a fence that borders a horse exercise track. *A wooden gate is set in the fence. It is difficult to open and you have to duck under the top rail of the fence to get through.*

You cross the horse track to an iron gate that leads into a grassy field. *There is no indication here of the path and the gate is overgrown with nettles.* To the left is an empty stone barn and the path goes past the back of the barn, then bends left, past the side of the barn, through a wide gap between the wall of the barn and some trees and onto a wide path that leads along the left edge of the field back to Eastcote Road and the Old Wilds. There is one arrow marker on a post next to the trees, which you see as you approach from the other direction, but it has been used for target practice and is full of holes. On the road opposite the Old Wilds, there is a wooden footpath sign and an overgrown stile. Access to the road is through a wooden farm gate.

Action – hedge needs to be cut back at Goggs Farm on the north side of the drive. A stile or gate is needed next to the main gates on the south side of the drive and an arrow

marker. Overgrown stiles need to be cleared. Access across the horse exercise track needs to be improved. Arrow markers are needed around the empty stone barn.

RL13 – A bridleway, it runs from Eastcote Road west towards Dalscote and is 800 metres long. Walked 21/11/08 by John Shaw and 20/11/08 by Barry Steer. It starts about 200 metres beyond the entrance to Hillcrest Road at the right-hand side of the Eastcote Road. It is clearly marked with a “Bridleway” sign and is entered by a small gate next to a double farm gate. It runs more or less straight ahead, with a little meandering, and a gradual downward slope, apart from the last steep 20metres, to meet RT6 and RT7 at a wide and well built wooden bridge over a wooded valley and stream, which is the parish boundary with Patishall.

At the far side of the bridge there are two arrow markers on a post, one indicating RT6 to the left and one indicating RT7 straight ahead. According to the map, RT6 also goes right to meet RL14 at the stream (see report on RL14 below), but there is no arrow marker to indicate this.

Action: None required.

RL14 – Runs from Fiveways, behind the village hall towards Dalscote and is 900metres long. Walked 21/11/08 by John Shaw and 20/11/08 by Barry Steer. This footpath starts at the Fiveways crossroads and is clearly signed “Footpath”. It crosses the hard-standing which once formed the base of garages and passes between the village hall and the school playground, before running between the backs of houses in Hillcrest Road, to the left, and Bugbrooke Road, to the right. This part of the path was recently cleared.

At the end of the houses, there is a stile, on which the arrow marker is broken in half. After the stile the path runs gently downwards with fields on either side and just as it starts to rise slightly, there is a lone tree about 30 metres on the left-hand side with an arrow marker attached.

After 150 metres or so, the slope then dips downwards more steeply to end, in the corner of the field, at a wooded valley, through which runs a small stream, the parish boundary with Patishall. After the initial stile and until this point there is no physical indication of a footpath as such, presumably through lack of use. For most of the way, the tracks left by tractors and/or the edge of the fields suffice.

According to the ‘Definitive Map’, from this point RL14 goes through the trees and across the stream, to meet Patishall’s footpath RT6, which goes left to cross the Bridleway RT7, at its junction with RL13. An old narrow and disused bridge is visible through the thick undergrowth, but it is inaccessible. This bridge can be reached from the other side of the stream, at the end of RT6, but it consists of a single plank, about 30 cms. wide and several metres long. There are no handrails, it is covered in damp moss and slippery and it bends as you walk across. The wood is rotting and could easily break. It is therefore quite dangerous and should be removed.

This RL14/RT6 bridge is probably not worth the cost of replacing, because about 150 metres to the south is a wide well built wooden bridge with handrails, where the bridleways RL13 and RT7 meet at the stream (see report on RL13 above). *Therefore, instead of crossing the stream at the end of RL14, as shown on the map, you have to turn left and follow the western edge of the field and the eastern bank of the stream, to RL13, then go right, down a slope through the trees and across the wooden bridge to RT7 and RT6. This discrepancy between*

the route of RL14 as shown on the map and the actual route on the ground was not picked up in the 2004 survey.

Action: Remove dangerous single plank bridge and either replace it or reroute the ‘right of way’ from the western bank of the stream (RT6) to the eastern side (RL14). Not urgent - replace broken sign on the stile.

RL15 – Walked 18/11/08. Runs from Bugbrooke Road north to Banbury Lane and is 350 metres long. According to the Definitive map the right of way begins in Bugbrooke Road about 220 metres from the junction with Banbury Lane. *There is an opening at this point into a cultivated field but no footpath sign or arrow marker. There is no sign of a path across the field, but halfway across there is a ditch running down to Banbury lane and at the point where the path should cross the ditch it is filled in and there is a wide grassy crossing.*

There is also no sign of a path across the next field, but it is possible to walk around the grassy verge to the point where the path should emerge onto Banbury Lane. In fact there is no exit at all, just a thick hedge and wide ditch all the way along to the corner of the field. At the point where the exit should be, as shown on the map, there is an old rusty gate lying in the middle of the impenetrable hedge – perhaps there was a way out here many years ago. We reported in our 2004 survey that this footpath appears to be extinct and nothing has changed. It is not very useful, because it is short, simply cuts off a corner and does not connect with other paths, so it may not be worth the cost of reinstating it. On the other hand, there seems little point in retaining it as a right of way, if it is inaccessible.

Action – decide whether or not to retain as a ‘right of way’ and if it is to be retained, make it accessible with footpath signs on Bugbrooke Road and Banbury Lane, a path across the fields and a gate or stile in the Banbury Lane hedge.

RL16 – Walked 14/11/08. Runs from Banbury lane NW towards Bugbrooke and is 520 metres long. There is a footpath sign on the NW side of Banbury Lane. Access is through an iron gate and the path follows the left edge of the field with a hedge to the left. At the end of the field the path goes over a stile, set into a broken down fence, into the next field, then follows the right edge of the field, with the hedge to the right. An arrow marker points back towards Banbury Lane. At the end of this field the path goes through an iron gate into the next field, there are arrow markers here pointing in both directions.

The path goes across the middle of this field to a foot bridge over a stream and through a hedge. *At the time of walking the field had been fairly recently ploughed and the path had not been reinstated, so it was very hard going.* The footbridge marks the boundary with Bugbrooke and the path becomes KD27.

Action – reinstate the path across the ploughed field.

RL17 – Walked 12/11/08. Runs from Blisworth Road west to Goggs Farm. *The footpath sign on Blisworth road is missing. The post is still there, leaning and covered in several years’ growth of ivy, but the finger was broken off years ago – reported in our 2004 survey.* Access to the path is through a wide gap in the hedge and the path follows the left edge of a cultivated field, along a grassy verge with trees and a deep trench to the left. About halfway across the field, the trees and the trench end and the path continues across the field and is well marked. It then runs along the right edge of a paddock attached to the first house on Tiffield Road.

A footpath sign on Tiffield road points in both directions. After crossing the road a *basic wood bridge (2 planks and no hand rail)* spans a pond in trees and the path comes out into a cultivated field. It follows the right edge along a grassy verge. At the end of the field, the path goes right through a wide gap in the hedge, then after a few yards left (*no arrow markers here*) and follows the right edge of the next field to Eastcote Road. Just before the road, it goes around the left edge of a pond in trees.

On the far side of the road a footpath sign points back towards Tiffield Road. The path continues about 10 yards to the left, where a footpath sign points to Goggs farm. A stile set in a hedge leads to a grassy path, which runs parallel with the drive to the farm. The path runs between a hedge to the right and a fence to the left, which runs along the edge of a horse exercise track. *However the stile is overgrown and virtually inaccessible, thus forcing the walker to use the farm drive.* At the end of the path a stile leads onto the drive and the junction with RL12.

Action – replace footpath sign on Blisworth Road. Add handrail to bridge over pond. Fix arrow markers between Tiffield and Eastcote Roads. Clear the stile on Eastcote Road.

RL18 – Walked 14/11/08. Canal Towpath from the Bugbrooke boundary to Milton Road, 2400 metres long. The path runs along the north bank of the Grand Union Canal and is well signed all the way. From the Bugbrooke boundary, it goes past Anchor Farm on the south bank, under bridge 43, the old Banbury Lane, then *bridge 43A, the new Banbury Lane bridge, not shown on the Definitive Map of 1/7/2005.* Bridge 44, ‘Easts’ Bridge’ is a cattle crossing. Bridge 45 is Wright’s Lane. Halfway to the next bridge, the Rothersthorpe boundary crosses the path, so it becomes LA8 for about 100 yards. The next bridge, 46, is another cattle crossing and is the junction with footpath RL3. RL18 ends at the Milton Road bridge, no. 47 ‘Gayton’, where it goes under the bridge and back along a gentle slope up onto Milton road. A path also goes across the bridge to the south side of the canal and the towpath continues to Blisworth Arm, where it meets RL5 and RD19.

Action: update the map to show new Banbury Lane bridge 43A.

RL19 – Walked 9/11/08. Runs from Blisworth Road west to Baker Street is 150 metres long and is known as Harris’ Lane. There is no footpath sign at either end of this short path. It is regularly mowed and the hedge cut back, so it is accessible.

No action required.

RL20 – Walked 12/11/08. A tarmac path, 90 metres long, running from Fiveways across the Village Green to the village hall and Hillcrest Road, with the playing field and children’s playground to the left and car park to the right. At the Fiveways end is a sign reading “village hall” and a diagram of a pedestrian. There is no sign at the Hillcrest Road end.

No action required.

Barry Steer, Gayton Parish Path Warden. 27 November 2008.