

This article by Martin Voysey appeared on page 5 of the very first edition of the Hatfield Peverel Review in January 1974:

Peverel Path Society

Our footpaths are a small part of the past which we have inherited. The origin of our network of footpaths is lost in the past — most of those we still have were in existence in the eighteenth century but many more fell into disuse before modern records began. Indeed, a few years ago this valuable amenity was in danger of extinction. Without our footpaths people would not be able to get away from the traffic to see the little that remains of our attractive and interesting countryside.

More and more people are discovering (or rediscovering) the enjoyment of a relaxing or educational morning or afternoon walk. It is not surprising therefore, that footpath societies are springing up all over the country.

The Peverel Path Society is just one of these groups of people concerned to see that their local paths are kept, restored and improved. The Society was formed in the spring of 1971 and immediately set out to survey all the official rights of way with- in and around the parish.

Since that time we have cleared all the under- growth, installed eight footbridges, and erected about twenty signposts for the County Council, apart of course, from our main activity — arranging regular walks for our members and their families and friends.

The landowners' views of footpaths are varied. Most are helpful and welcome our efforts to clear the paths and mark them so that walkers keep to the recognised routes, but one or two (unfortunately, sometimes supported by the Rural District Council) try to have them closed. The County Council however, adopts an enlightened policy and usually finds a compromise that meets the legitimate needs of the landowner without destroying the public's right of way. It is worth repeating that most landowners and farmers are not antagonistic to walkers who respect their property and observe a few common sense rules, and we on our part, welcome any chance to discuss the footpaths with them.

Some paths originally had very different reasons for their existence from those they have today. This is also true of roads, but roads have grown with the times and have been adapted to modern circumstances. It is not therefore, surprising to find that a few footpaths could benefit from similar rationalisation. After all, it is usually more pleasant to walk beside a hedgerow than across the middle of a field.

Our programme for 1974 includes Sunday walks (both morning and afternoon) every first Sunday, and working parties every third Sunday of each month.

You don't have to join a society to walk the footpaths, but it makes it more interesting. Come and join us! Membership is free.

Martin Voysey, Secretary