

Swanage Rights of Way Survey - To provide a progress report and results of footpath surveys undertaken by volunteers

The Swanage Rights of Way Survey Report December 2021 was officially presented at a public meeting on 21st June 2022. The report, completed on behalf of the Council by Ian Fleming incorporated summaries of 103 paths and set out 7 recommendations.

The first recommendation was in respect of footpath volunteers and proposed the recruitment of a number of local people who have a keen interest in the local countryside and its rights of way network and who might be interested to act as footpath volunteers.

The second recommendation related to route grading and inspection schedules and recommended that once volunteer teams are established, a process of route grading may be considered. This would enable resources to be concentrated upon the routes which need them most.

In order to progress these recommendations a working group comprising Sustainable Swanage, Dorset Council Senior Ranger (Purbeck) and Swanage Town Council Officers was set up and promotional material was created asking for volunteers to monitor the footpaths of Swanage. Over 20 volunteers expressed an interest and an introductory training session was held on Tuesday 19th July at Durlston Country Park.

At this meeting volunteers were allocated routes and provided with guidance on completing the Rights of Way Grading Scale form, recording the condition of footpaths against a range of criteria to enable a Red, Amber and Green overall rating for each footpath to be determined. A copy of the Footpath Monitoring Form setting out the indicators for each rating is appended to this report.

The initial round of volunteer monitoring has now been completed and the results are shown in the table below.

Rights of Way Grading Scale	Red	Amber	Green	Number of Footpaths Surveyed
	14	17	48	69

Key themes that have emerged from the surveys to date are shown in the table below.

Gates / Stiles	2
No issues	22
Overgrown Vegetation	5
Overgrown Vegetation, Surfacing	5
Surfacing	4
Waymarking	15
Waymarking, Gates / Stiles	1
Waymarking, Gates / Stiles, Overgrown Vegetation	2
Waymarking, Gates / Stiles, Surfacing	4

Waymarking, Overgrown Vegetation	6
Waymarking, Overgrown Vegetation, Surfacing	1
Waymarking, Surfacing	2

These results have been reviewed and next steps are currently being planned, these will involve:

- Encouraging volunteers to repeat the walks in the Spring to assess the rating in different seasons;
- Encouraging volunteers to complete footpath surveys on routes that have not been walked;
- Improving waymarking and working with volunteers to install this;
- Identifying and promoting planned footpath improvement works;
- Creating Swanage Footpath Walkabout leaflets that can be downloaded – see example Walkabout Leaflet appended to this report.

Given the nature of this project, and the importance of footpaths as part of a sustainable transport network, it is proposed that future updates, to be provided twice yearly, are reported to the Environment Committee.

For information

To note the contents of this report and the progress made to date in respect of the recommendations made in the Rights of Way Survey Report 2021.

To note the proposal that further updates in respect of this project are reported to the Environment Committee.

Gail Percival
Assets & Compliance Manager

March 2023

Footpath Monitoring in Swanage

Please complete a survey form once every 3 months for each path and allocate a grading, see information below. The data will be shared to Dorset Council Ranger Service however any serious issues that require urgent attention should be reported using the online tool:

[Report a problem on a public right of way - Dorset Council](#)

Rights of way grading scale

Green routes

1. Route is free of obstructions and easy to use for walkers (or riders in the case of bridleways)
2. Surface is adequate to good throughout
3. Waymarking is clear and appropriate, with waymarks at all appropriate locations.
Any fingerposts are in good condition
4. All stiles and gates on the route are in good order
 - Stiles are firm, with treads and top bars in good condition
 - Stile treads may have metal anti-slip inserts
 - Stile treads are at an appropriate height for average walkers
 - Gates are in good condition and catches/closure mechanisms are easy to use

Amber routes

1. Route may have some partial seasonal obstruction due to undergrowth
2. Part of route may have a poor surface, perhaps due to horses' hooves or flooding
3. Waymarking is generally adequate, but could be enhanced
4. Stiles or gates may need some attention (slippery tread, height of tread, jammed gate catch, etc)

Red routes

1. Route is liable to considerable obstruction by vegetation on a periodic basis
2. Surface may be very poor for a major proportion of route (could be subject to flooding or deep mud in winter)
3. Waymarking is not fully adequate and is in need of enhancement
4. There are dilapidated or missing stiles or gates

At least two criteria must apply in each case. If a small portion of a route is graded poorly, the lower grade will be applied to the whole route.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The area around **Gotts Corner** was occupied by Flemish refugees, who established the textile industry here, having been driven from their homeland by religious persecution.



At the top of the field, before turning to cross Bath Road, there is a **splendid panorama** of the river and its valley.



With such a variety of **bird and insect life** here, occasionally you may see a Kestrel, Buzzard or Heron flying overhead.



The **Butts Pond Meadows** were given to the Town in 2004, and are now managed as a Nature Reserve and amenity area.



The low-lying area is home to all **three species of British newt** – including the protected Great Crested Newt.



The path from the Meadows back to the car park, which passes the site of the **Old Creamery**, is the 'Jubilee Path', created as a traffic-free route for walkers and cyclists.



Photo credits: Helen Baggott, John Lewis, Giles Nicholson, Sturminster Newton Museum, Jan Wardell, Wildstock

STURMINSTER NEWTON WALKABOUTS

WALKABOUT 1

Gotts Corner / Honeymead Lane / Butts Pond Meadows

A varied walk with features of interest in Sturminster Newton, both past and present (approx. 1.5 miles).

This is one of a series of circular walks from Sturminster Newton which take in the surrounding area of the Blackmore Vale. They are mainly on Public Rights of Way, with some on paths with access permitted by the landowners.

These walks are intended to encourage exploration and appreciation of the variety and beauty of the countryside in this locality, on foot. Cyclists are not permitted to ride on public footpaths and by law must give way to walkers and horseriders on bridleways.

When walking, please remember the Countryside Code, particularly:

- respect the local community, farmland and others enjoying the countryside
- leave gates and property as you find them
- leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- keep dogs under effective control
- keep to the marked paths and cause no damage to crops, livestock or wildlife

Appropriate footwear is recommended, since wet or muddy conditions can be encountered at any time.

The Sturminster Newton Walkabouts have been developed by the Sturminster Newton Town Council in association with Dorset County Council and are available from Sturquest Community Office, Sturminster Library, the Museum and Sturminster Mill or can be downloaded from www.dorsetforyou.com/walkabouts

Further information can be obtained from the Town Council on 01258 475136.



Sturminster
Newton
Town Council



STURMINSTER NEWTON WALKABOUTS

Gotts Corner / Honeymead Lane / Butts Pond Meadows



WALKABOUT
1

GOTTS CORNER / HONEYMEAD LANE / BUTTS POND MEADOWS

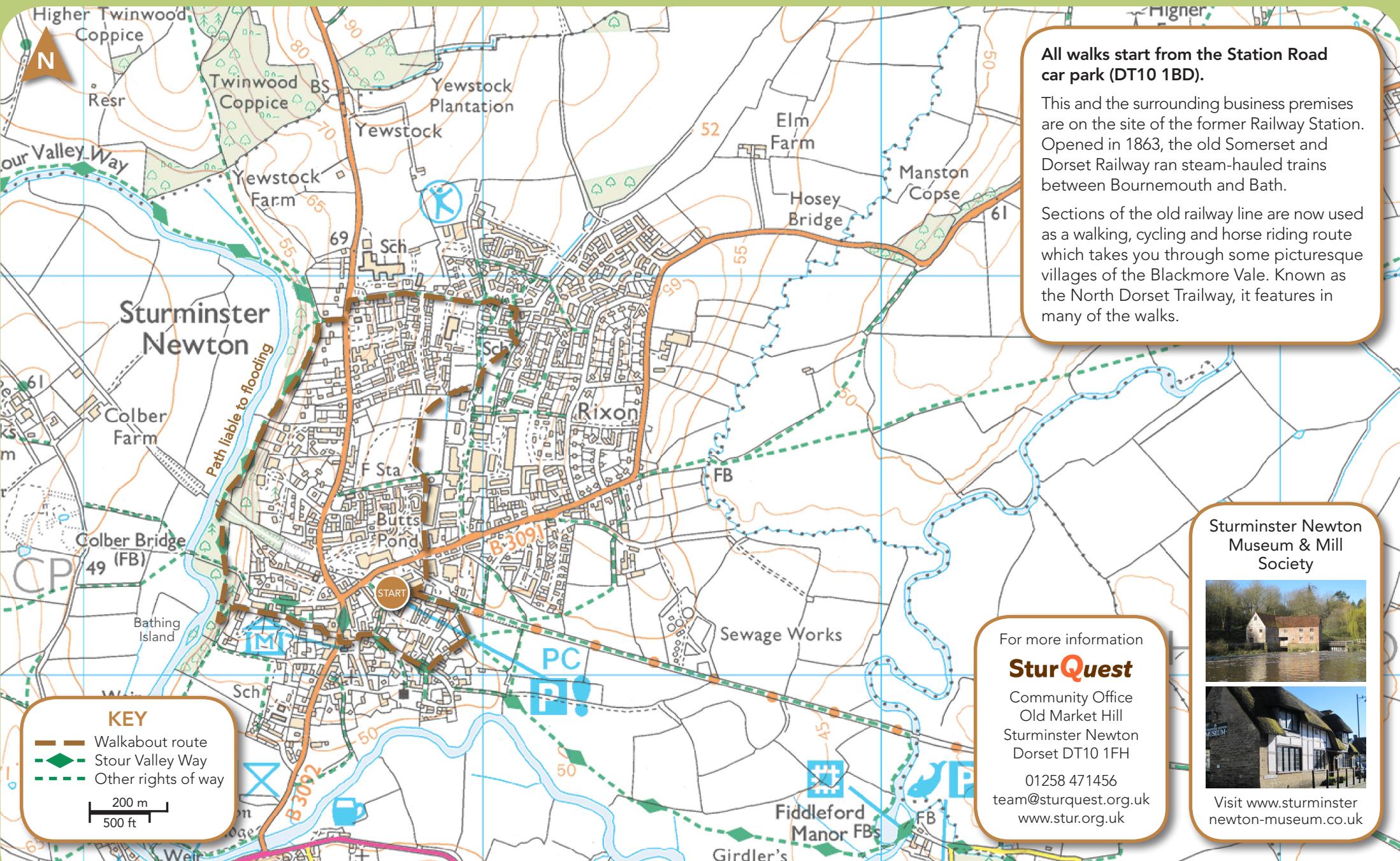
A varied walk with features of interest in Sturminster Newton, both past and present.

STARTING POINT

Station Road car park,
Sturminster Newton

DISTANCE

approximately
1.5 miles



All walks start from the Station Road car park (DT10 1BD).

This and the surrounding business premises are on the site of the former Railway Station. Opened in 1863, the old Somerset and Dorset Railway ran steam-hauled trains between Bournemouth and Bath. Sections of the old railway line are now used as a walking, cycling and horse riding route which takes you through some picturesque villages of the Blackmore Vale. Known as the North Dorset Trailway, it features in many of the walks.

For more information

SturQuest

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www.stur.org.uk



Visit www.sturminsternewton-museum.co.uk