

The story of Crooklands Hill Footpath - 2016-2017



For many years the lack of a footpath at Crooklands Hill has been a major safety issue for our community and it came out as one of the top concerns in the first ever Community Plan Questionnaire in 2015. After many twists and turns, concerns over lack of funding, legalities, permissions, materials and manpower the Preston Richard Community Plan Working Group (CPWG) eventually reached all the agreements necessary to start work on the footpath.

The CPWG story of how it came into being is as follows:

We started way back in June 2015 by contacting Eddie and Anne Galbraith of Crooklands Farm to see if an offer made by his father in excess of 50 years previous to give land for an extension to the footpath between Crooklands and Endmoor was still on the table and Eddie confirmed he would honour his father's offer. So next we had to see what funds we could raise and set about seeking grants from various sources. Having to buy land would have been one of the largest obstacles and so the community owe a great debt of gratitude to Anne & Eddie Galbraith for allowing the footpath to be built on their land. We set about raising funds and secured money from the CPWG, CCC Countryside Access Department, SLDC Locally Important Project fund, CCC Cllr. Roger Bingham, Preston Richard Parish Council so thanks to them all for supporting our community. And a special thanks to Geoff Fewkes the CCC Countryside Access Officer for his invaluable help with the legalities and tenders associated with this project.

The quotes then came in and the cheapest was £8000 above the funds available so back to the drawing board guys. A meeting was held between Eddie and Anne, Geoff Fewkes and the CPWG to see what could be done. Agreement was reached that the project would be split in two and the contractor would build the footpath, open up the walls and lay footing for the new wall. The footpath was then built in October 2016. The Community Plan group then had the task of sourcing some local stone at a reasonable price and getting someone to build 80 metres of stone wall. Once again the community came up trumps Eddie told the CPWG of a barn that had been demolished locally and the CPWG contacted the farmer Arthur Robinson. On explaining why we

wanted the stone Arthur very kindly offered the stone at a very reasonable price that was within our budget to enable the project to get back on track, our thanks to Arthur for his generosity. Well now we have the stone we have the footpath but very little money. Back to the begging bowl, the CPWG then contacted the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain (DSWA) to ask if they would be prepared to build the stone wall for very little money and after taking it to their district meeting they came back with the offer to build the wall free of charge to help the community, our thanks to the DSWA for their very generous offer. The CPWG then contacted Anne and Eddie Galbraith to see if this was acceptable to them and they were more than happy and once again they came up trumps, one of the conditions for the Stone Wallers was that we had to provide food and drink to sustain them as they worked. Eddie allowed them to camp on his land if needs be and have the use of his outside washing facilities and Anne came into her own by getting two friends who volunteered to help with the catering providing the costs of food and drink is met by the CPWG. This project turned into a real community project all round everyone doing their bit for the community. People of the village baked and made sandwiches, local shops donated food and drink, the Crooklands Hotel offers reduced rates, Lane Farm offered equipment. So March 2017 the work begin on the great wall of Crooklands and went on until completed. We hit a hitch in that we ran out of topping stones so the CPWG had to source yet more stone which was provided once again at a reduced rate by a local farmer David Inman our thanks to David.

May 2017 saw the opening of the completed footpath wall all within budget and a great asset to the community for its safe passage through our parish and linking us to Preston Patrick on foot.

It was great to see how the community pulled together in this way to get the problem solved and just as important enjoying doing it. No political or business interests just straightforward community spirit acting for the welfare of everyone.

