

## NETTLETON PARISH

### COTSWOLD FOOTPATH WARDENS' REPORT FOR MAY 2022 - MAY 2023

There are 52 Rights of Way (ROW) in Nettleton Parish with a total length of just over 30km. The Parish Warden duties are shared between Andrew Carrington (AC) (predominantly covering the Southern part of the parish) and David Kerr (DK) (focussing on the Northern areas) both of whom live in the Parish and hence walk many of the paths frequently. The agreed division of the parish makes the monitoring task manageable. Andrew Carrington's responsibility covers 21 paths (5 bridleways and 15 footpaths & 1 permissive footpath) totalling just over 13.5 km. David Kerr's responsibility covers 31 paths (8 bridleways and 23 footpaths) totalling just over 17 km. All the ROW have been walked during the year, mostly at least twice, and some on a much more frequent basis. Generally, all routes are in good condition, with a few exceptions noted below. A Cotswold Wardens (CW) work party will be needed for some of these when this can be arranged. Works undertaken in the past year and current status are as follows:

- NETT1 – Generally no problems. However the ladder stile at the Western end is deteriorating as a result of rot. Materials were requested from Wiltshire Council in December, but are, as yet, still awaited.



- NETT2 (BW) – No problems.
- NETT3 – The route between Westfield Farm and Kington Down Farm has always been somewhat vague. The apparent mapped route leads to a drystone wall with no history of ever having a suitable crossing. The easiest solution is to open a gate into the adjoining field and walk a yard or 2 to the West of the definitive line. It seems likely that a minor error in mapping has led to this confusion. Way-markers have been added to assist walkers navigate the route. One wooden hunting gate *en route* is slightly fiddly to open. The farmer of this land is currently exploring the possibility of grants to improve access gates on the farm. A permissive route across the fields at the southern end of the route is available as a shortcut – the line of this route is not defined, in the hope that walkers will take a sensible line to avoid crops and livestock.  
  
Work was undertaken in 2021 to improve access between Westfield Farm and Tolldown Road. The route is far less muddy than it used to be, as vehicular access by tractors has ceased. Way-markers were erected or restored to clarify the route, as well as defining a permissive path agreed with the Land Owner (LO), who also erected a new stile onto the road. The official start of the FP is still through a gate secured with string but the access is now easier than it used to be.
- NETT4 (BW) – Clearance of encroaching or overhead vegetation and branches has been carried out when necessary. The Western end had its annual brushcutting in summer by AC in July 2022.
- NETT5 – Steps at the bottom end have been strimmed last May and July. This is a task needed on a regular basis as nettles grow particularly well at this point.
- NETT6 (alongside the stream in West Kington) – Winter flooding, which makes the route impassable, was fairly frequent last winter but there has been little erosion of the bank. The Landowners at the Western End

have regularly strimmed the path, reducing the amount of brushcutting carried out by AC – the Eastern end has been brush-cut twice during the period of this report, as well as clearance of branches or brambles etc.

- NETT7A - This path, which leads from West Kington up a steep hill to the church, can become very slippery in winter because it is steep, overhung by trees and seldom dries out. The drainage was improved by Wiltshire Council in 2018 and since then the condition has improved. This path is monitored by Wiltshire Council rather than the CW's. There were 3 trees leaning across the path last year, endangering power cables which were felled by Electricity Company during the winter.
- NETT7 – No problems. One damaged way-marker has been replaced.
- NETT8 – The 2 old railway sleepers forming the ditch crossing are starting to rot. Replacement materials have been requested from Wiltshire Council.
- NETT9 – Stile access to road cleared when necessary.
- NETT10 – The stile at the junction between NETT10 and NETT12 was in poor condition and was rebuilt in September 2022.



- NETT10A – The LO has installed a new gate at the junction with Wood Lane (replacing a wobbly stile) New double metal field gate needs a WM.
- NETT11 (BW) – Overhanging branches have been cut back in several places to improve headroom for riders on the stretch between Smith Street and the West Kington Wick lane. Smith Street itself has had no problems, other than parts of the track becoming very muddy in winter. The landowner has recently cleared some surface mud with a JCB, exposing a hard stony surface.
- NETT11A (BW) – The Eastern end, close to the Fosseway is narrow and tends to get overgrown. Brushcutting of this stretch of the bridleway was carried out in summer 2022. The landowner also cut back and cleared the track between the West Kington Wick lane and the stone bridge (known as Latimer Walk). Occasional other minor clearance was carried out as required, including removal of 2 small fallen trees.
- NETT11B (BW) – Parts of this BW are on ground with a steep cross slope, thus difficult when very muddy.
- NETT12 – See NETT11A – the bottom end has been extensively brush-cut on 2 occasions, most recently following the installation of the new fence. Signage has been added to the fence and AC has constructed a footplate to ease access at the junction with NETT11A.
- NETT13 – See NETT11A – the new gate necessitates walkers finding a different route up the hill on NETT13 from the one which has become established. Some clearance to ease alternative routes (only necessary until the electric fence has been removed after the grazing season) has been carried out.
- NETT14 – No problems. The middle gateway has been heavily poached through the winter, but livestock have now left this field and it is drying up quickly.
- NETT15 – As mentioned in the 2022 report, the fence around the stile at the bottom end is a bit wobbly, but has not deteriorated further and it is still serviceable at present.
- NETT16 – A finger post marking the direction of this footpath from Smith Street had been pointing in the wrong direction. This was corrected in autumn 2022.

- NETT17 – No problems. The landowner has helpfully kept the headland of this field mowed. Additional brushcutting at the junction to NETT49 has been the only task required by AC.
- NETT18 – No problems.
- NETT19 – number not used
- NETT20 – No problems.
- NETT21 – No problems.
- NETT22 – This is a short FP between Manor Farm and farm cottages. It now serves no purpose and is not maintained.
- NETT23 – This FP crosses a large field of crops and the farmer usually clears the route.
- NETT24 (BW) – No problems.
- NETT25 (BW) - This BW crosses a large field of crops and the farmer clears the route.
- NETT26 – The route of this FP runs around a wide field edge and then crosses another field where the route is usually cleared by the farmer.
- NETT27 (BW) – The section of this BW on the steep hill down to Goulters Mill was cleared and widened by CW in February this year, thus making it easier for use by both riders and walkers. It will still tend to become very muddy in winter due to the steepness of the hill.
- NETT28 –The pedestrian gate at the start of path near Goulters Mill was replaced in November 2022. The stiles at the East end (on GRITT1) are high and unfriendly to dogs – they have to be lifted over!



- NETT29 – Satisfactory. (It should be as half of it is on DK's land!)
- NETT30 – Satisfactory.
- NETT31 – Satisfactory.
- NETT32 - North part from the M4 bridge to Burton – The farmer does not mark the FP route across his field of crops – action by the farmer is still required.
- NETT32 – South part from Burton to Burton Farm: the gate at the mid-point of this FP does not open – has to be climbed. An additional WM is needed at the corner of Burton churchyard to assist navigation.
- NETT33 – Number not used.
- NETT34 (BW) – Satisfactory as a FP. The heavily eroded rocky South part is difficult for horses, especially when wet. Local horse riders use a diversion on an adjacent farm track.
- NETT35 – FP across a field to the Parish boundary with Littleton Drew. Route marking needed at the centre of the field.
- NETT36 – Marked as a BW on the map but it is too narrow for a BW and only leads to a FP, (NETT35) and to the M4 fence! Marking as a BW appears to be a relic from before the M4 was built. The designation as a BW is dangerous. Anyone attempting to ride a horse along the path would find the route impassable at a narrow sleeper bridge and too narrow to turn around. CW consider that the route should be re-designated

as a FP. Action DK to discuss with Wiltshire Council. It tends to be very overgrown in summer. It was cleared by CW in February this year.



- NETT37 – Brushcutting of the narrow section of the track (where the landowner can't access with a tractor) was completed in July. The metal way-marker post off the Marshfield Road rusted through during the summer of 2022. It has temporarily been secured to a tree, pending replacement by Wiltshire Council.



- NETT38 (BW) – Satisfactory.
- NETT39 – (A short FP between houses in Nettleton). Has been cleared of overhanging vegetation by LO last year. Now satisfactory, except that it becomes very muddy in winter due to lack of drainage.
- NETT40 (BW) - Overhanging branches need to be cut for horse riders.
- NETT41 – Needs regular cutting back of foliage. (Done by DK and a local resident). The stile at the Northern end was repaired by CW in September 2022.
- NETT42 – A WM is needed at the junction with NETT48. Location needs to be agreed with adjacent property owners.
- NETT43 (BW) - This is the access road to the Goulters Mill property.
- NETT44 – The landowner maintains the upper section of this path well, but the lower section is brush-cut by AC annually (not yet required in 2023).
- NETT45 - Number not used.
- NETT46 – Satisfactory.
- NETT47 – Satisfactory.
- NETT48 – Satisfactory. (A very short FP from Nettleton Mill to join the FP to Castle Combe)
- NETT49 – No problems. Many walkers follow the alternative unofficial route on the other side of the wall – see NETT17.

*Andrew Carrington & David Kerr - May 2023*