

## Parish Footpath Officer's Report – March 2026

**1. Aconbury Grant** - The grant discussed at the last meeting for new gates and waymarker posts for Aconbury Parish has now been delivered. Installation will take place within the next couple of weeks. The gates were supplied directly by the PROW team, so no invoice will be issued for these. The only cost to pass through Little Birch Parish Council accounts will be for labour and materials, totalling £230.

**2. Parish Map** - Thank you for your contributions to the map text. The revised version is now complete. We found that the original wording exceeded the available space around the map, so some edits were necessary. We have prioritised places of interest over purely historical detail. Please see the separate sheet for the updated version.

**3. Training** - I recently attended a PROW-organised training course on strimming and hedge cutting. Later this month, I will also be taking part in a course on risk assessment and safety.

**4. Merrivale Gates** - Bob Mason at Merrivale Farm has replaced the fencing around his field and installed two self-closing gates. These improvements will make access significantly easier.

**5. Accessible Walk** - I have been in discussion with Angela Martin from Accessible Herefordsire about establishing an accessible walk at Athelstan's Wood. I will be meeting Angela and Ben Anderson, Head of Forestry for the Duchy, the week after next to walk the route and assess feasibility.

**6. Muddy Woody** - On 8 February, Wye Valley Runners held a 10 km cross-country event through Aconbury Hill and Little Birch, with 250 runners taking part. This has caused considerable churning of the footpaths. Several members of the public expressed concern that no signage had been put up to warn them of the event. I will be asking the organisers to ensure that both myself and local residents are informed of any future events.

**7. Parish Walk** - Despite very wet weather, 16 people joined the Parish Walk at the beginning of February. This strong turnout shows that even poor conditions do not deter people from getting out for fresh air.

Our next walk will take place on 5 April and will be our annual Dawn Chorus Walk. It will start and finish at Merrivale Farm and will be led by Adrian Hodges and Bob Mason. On our return, the Masons will kindly provide bacon rolls, tea, and coffee. I hope many of you will be able to join us.

Chris Fowler

Parish Footpath Officer, Little Birch