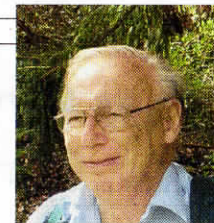


Horsham Society

with Nigel Friswell



Are our much-loved twittens at risk?

Now, here's a thing we don't often think about: urban footpaths, alleyways and twittens which we use everyday to get about Horsham.

Did you know that they could be under threat and that in ten years' time you might suddenly find that the short cut you use so often might be closed off for ever?

Pre-1949 rights of way that are not on official maps must be recorded by 2026 or they will no longer be protected for public use. Some groups who concern themselves about the countryside, like the Ramblers Association and the Open Spaces Society are aware of the need to make such byways official but the legislation also applies to urban footpaths which are often taken for granted.

In Horsham we have twittens (I will use the Sussex name) between ancient burgable plots, for example Morth Gardens and Pump Alley. We also have paths such as those along the Riverside, recently improved by the Horsham Town Community Partnership. As I write this, I have no idea of the status of these and all the others in the built-up area of Horsham



Pump Alley in Horsham in the 1950s

town. What I do know is that if any of these were to be suddenly shut off it would cause chaos and hardship to many pedestrians, as well as losing a valuable part of our heritage and the town's character.

Ten years sounds a long way ahead. Surely someone is looking into this? The answer is that just at the moment we don't know and that if things need to be done we cannot rely on someone else to do it. The wheels of officialdom grind exceedingly slow so now is the time to start thinking about the problem.

We could find that every twitten in Horsham is officially recorded and registered and then we can all breathe a big sigh of relief. But I doubt it. We are more likely to find that many paths in the town centre and those on our housing estates are in use by custom and will need Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMOs) to make them available for public use after 2026.

Because we have only recently become aware of this problem I cannot say which organisation in Horsham might take it on. However, one thing that I can be certain of

is that, first of all, we will need members of the public to identify our urban twittens and, then, a volunteer to collate the information. Then we will need volunteers to go to Chichester where the county's definitive footpath maps are kept to search through to identify which of our twittens are 'official' and which need to be put on a DMMO.

If we do nothing we could find that home owners extend their gardens across a twitten or fence off paths that have been used for decades. It will be a massive task to check up on every Horsham twitten but it must be done or the whole character of the town could be changed for ever. If you would like to volunteer to help please contact me, preferably by E-mail: chairman@horshamsociety.org or, alternatively, by telephone, see below.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who shares these concerns. For more information, visit the website www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 261905.