

RAMBLERS AND PARISH COUNCIL COMPLETE STILE-FREE ROUTE

Finchampstead Parish Council and Loddon Valley Ramblers have worked together to ensure that the Blackwater Valley path through the parish is now stile-free.

Four stiles were replaced with new kissing gates on a short stretch of footpath near Greenacres Farm between May and July 2021. These gates were paid for by the Ramblers and the Parish Council, and were installed by a team of volunteers from Loddon Valley, led by project co-ordinator Ray Sharp. Permission for the replacements was kindly granted by the Greenacres Farm landowner, Peter Nice.

The installations required particular care, as the gates will give access to fields used for horses, with electric fences, so that equine and human safety were both paramount in planning their locations.

Following the installation of 2 gates to replace stiles on the same path near Jouldings Lane in 2019, and the installation of another gate at Fleethill Farm in 2020, these latest gates mean that the Blackwater Valley path is now stile-free all the way from Swallowfield to Sandhurst. This is a major step along the way to converting as many stiles as possible in Wokingham Borough, to the benefit of walkers who find stiles problematic.

Steve Vale, Footpath Officer with Loddon Valley Ramblers said “I was very pleased with the cooperation from both the Parish Council and the landowner which ensured that, at long last, we have excellent access for all, along a whole stretch of the Blackwater Valley long distance path”.

David Cornish, Chair of the Council’s Rights of Way Committee said “We were delighted to be able to work with the Ramblers and to support this project. The installation of the new gates has made it easier for our residents to take shorter local walks, as well as for those wanting to walk longer distances without meeting obstacles on the way.”

Christine Harvey, Chair of Loddon Valley Ramblers said: “This is another good example of what can be achieved working in partnership with local communities, and I am delighted that our members were able to work with the Council, and to play a key role in completing this project. Special thanks are due to Ray and the installation team.”

Photo 1 (below) shows Ray and the team following a successful morning’s work installing a gate.



Photo 2: Peter Nice, Steve Vale, Sheila Hobbs from Loddon Valley Ramblers, David Cornish, Graham Croucher from Loddon Valley Ramblers, and Ray Sharp on site.

