

These Sticks are made for Walking

Well covered and wrapped up against the winter weather, to the point of being completely unrecognisable, it's great to be out and about, just simply walking. No urgency, no absolute time or appointment to arrive at, just the sheer pleasure of putting one foot in front of the other in the fresh air. We are very fortunate to have in this area, so many footpaths, which ever road you choose to go along, there's a footpath, leading from it, either to another road, making a short cut, or just leading off across the fields into the open space, and on into the countryside. We have so much room to move, so unlike the close confines of a built up area, or the hustle, bustle of crowds, and the noise of the city centre. After Christmas and the celebrations of the New Year, all the 'get togethers', and indulgences, with family and friends', we maybe all could do with a little exercise.

Most of the year our public footpaths are kept tidy, the grass cut to a reasonable length, hedges cut back where needed, and the ground good to walk on. However, at this time of the year well-trodden areas hold water, and it can become very uneven underfoot, sometimes it seems that the mud wants to suck the boots right off your feet, our sticky clay soil gets very friendly indeed, when churned up and waterlogged, the fields themselves have a high water table. There is very little that anyone can do to improve it, it's countryside, and we have naturally to take extra care in these conditions, never the less, this should never prevent us from getting out.

We are fortunate in more ways than one in our village, not only do we have all this open space to enjoy, but we have someone who builds, or should I say creates and crafts, the most helpful travelling companion we could hope for, a smart walking stick. These sticks are not just for support, they are for striding out, and for use as an extra leg over holes, down steep hills and to get us out of our 'sticky mud', all this and a smart practical accessory. Beautifully made by Stephen Bell, the 'World Champion' stick maker, I feel as if I should say that twice, just to emphasise it, I did say that he was a 'World Champion', who's craftsmanship and artistry is outstanding, it makes you feel proud to hold and use such an item in your hand, not as an aid, but a piece of sports equipment, which it is, but far more beautiful than a golf club, which in some

people's eyes spoil a good walk! Stephens designs on the handles are exquisite pieces of art, birds heads carved and painted, and so realistic, nature not just imitated, but reproduced, crook handles made from different types of horn, and assorted woods, so strong and yet so comfortable in the hand. I have no idea what the criteria of rules of stick making are, but they obviously meet all of these, and more, plus in my opinion all the beauty of nature. What else can we ask for but fresh air and quiet countryside on any day?

Playing Field

At present it is very wet underfoot, but only to be expected, I'm sure it will improve as the season goes on. Repairs have been made to the Witches Hat, it held my weight and spun round beautifully when I tested it, so I feel sure that it will accommodate several children safely and still turn. It hasn't spun for over twelve months, fingers crossed.

Allotments

There is still time to book a plot to start the New Year, either a full one or if that is too much, a half can be used. Contact anyone at the parish council, if you're interested, it can be a great family joint effort.

Library

Open as normal after the Christmas break, and warm and welcoming place to find all the new books that have been recently published. Both the children's new editions and adults. If these are not on the shelves just yet, don't forget that they can be ordered.

Cemetery

The repairs to the side footpaths have now all been completed, cleaned back to their original width and resurfaced, these should now make it an easier and safer access, to all areas. A large tree has been removed from the front corner, this was in a dangerous state, and was within the grounds.

Memorial Hall

Continuing to host many activities, both entertainments and sports. The hall had a good Christmas and a successful new year; with your support it will continue to be successful. The repairs to the tennis courts are scheduled to be carried out this year, as early as possible.

Freda Dunkley

DEADLINE FOR THE SUMMER EDITION OF THE GANDER

Please have submissions in by Tues 1st May for distribution first week of June (for all date sensitive information)

email: editor@goxhillgander.com or contact **Jeff Teasdale on 07774 671175**