

Pillboxes, prefabs and pylons: Teddy's Trails

*How much do you know about the history of these? Those who have followed **Teddy's Trails** will be better informed about all three, and many other landscape features besides, says Teddy's owner **John Cartledge**.*

Canine housemates are no respecters of prior claims on one's time, as was borne in on me very forcefully when I took partial retirement. Retreating to my room and closing the door was no deterrent. Frantic scratching from the other side and plaintive whining signified that Teddy, the resident fox terrier, was up for a walk—and all other activities would have to be put on hold until his demands had been satisfied.



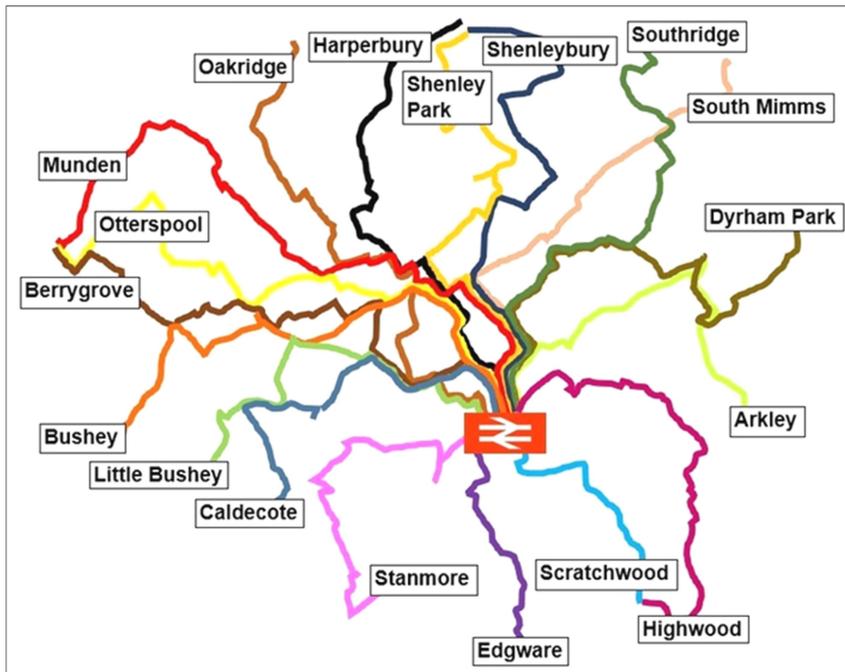
So he and I came to explore the local Rights of Way around our home town of Boreham Wood (in Hertfordshire's Deep South) more thoroughly in a matter of weeks than I had in the previous five decades. What struck me at once was how under-used many of them appeared to be. Although we are only 12 miles from Trafalgar Square, Green Belt planning controls mean that we are surrounded by open countryside, and a dense network of paths offering all sorts of different route options. The paths are generally well signed, and very few are obstructed, yet we could walk for miles without meeting anyone.

Conversations with acquaintances led me to conclude this is partly because many people have poor map-reading skills, and only travel by car. They may be aware of footpath signs at the roadside but have no idea where these lead, or what may lie on the other side of the hedge. They cannot conceive of any walk not starting at a car park. They don't get out and about on foot because they simply don't know how to—and they are the losers. So the idea of Teddy's Trails was born.

The Trails are a network of 18 different routes radiating from our local station. Each starts with a bus ride to a stop near the end of a path, and leads back to the town along public paths and country lanes. They range from three to eight miles, and most pass a pub or café. For each Trail there is an online guide describing the route, including the outward bus journey.

But these are not simply walk instructions. Each guide contains copious notes about points of interest en route, and personalities connected with the area. An eclectic cast appears: Queen Adelaide, Amy Winehouse, Charles II, Dick Turpin, Douglas Jardine, Edward Elgar, Graham and Damon Hill, Julius Caesar, Karren Brady, The Kinks, The Muppets, Napoleon Bonaparte, two Richard Burtons, Sacha Baron Cohen, Simon Cowell, Stamford Raffles and Wham! ... not forgetting three ghosts. Because the town has film and TV studios, locations used in soap operas, detective series and horror movies abound. Some people who cannot walk the Trails have used the guides as an introduction to local history.

The Trails project has been adopted by our town council, and was officially launched with a walk led by the mayor. More guided walks are planned, as part of the Herts festival of walking in May and our civic festival in July. The council's magazine has carried a competition to find the Brain of Borehamwood, with 10 cryptic questions based on the Trail guides.



To find the Trails, just enter 'Teddy's Trails' in a search engine or go to <http://tinyurl.com/stileteddy>. Single printed copies of individual guides are available from the council on request. If you decide to tackle any of them, please let Teddy know how you got on, by emailing him care of john.cartledge@cantab.net.

Oh, and if you want to know why the town's name is spelled in this article as both one word and two, studying the Trails will tell you.