# Proof of Evidence – Victoria Walker:

## Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
## The Definitive Map and Statement of
## Public Rights of Way for Gloucestershire

## Ref: ROW/3377321 - Additional Public Footpaths across land known as Verney Fields and Surrounding Area, Stonehouse Parish Modification Order 2025

**1**. I have known the claimed routes since I moved to Stonehouse in 1961 aged 8. As children, we (my friends and neighbours) regularly walked up Verney Road to the fields at the top of the road. There was a gate and a stile at the top of the road. There was no notice forbidding entry and we were never told we were not allowed on those fields. We walked to the east of Verney Road and through the Verney Field either on the bottom path (M-O) past the stream and cattle trough or, if there were cattle in the field, we took the upper path (J-O) to avoid them. Cattle were not in the field very often and if they were, we kept well away from them.

**2.** We went during the day to play on the fields, to catch tadpoles in the stream and go up to Doverow Wood. We usually stopped at the oak tree to sit on the bench, rest and enjoy the view. There were no barriers to access across the fields or to the stream. The bench was maintained and renewed at least once during the time I recall. During the winter we used to sledge down the hill.

**3.** As I got older I went to the fields less but still walked there for recreation. The route did not change much during that time from the 1970s to 2023. After I had my two children in 1977 and 1980, during the 1980s I took them there for walks and to see the trees and flowers which were very attractive. As they grew up we visited less but I still went there for walks. In later years from 2015 to 2023 we took the grandchildren there occasionally for walks in the holidays.

**4**. I could also walk up from Woodcock Lane, through Doverow Wood and back down across Verney Fields which was a lovely walk. In 2023 the bench under the oak tree was removed and barbed wire fences put up to prevent people walking across the field. Notices were placed at the Bramble Lane entrance forbidding access to the field via our old paths. Old caravans were placed to deter walkers.

**5.** I also walked from the oak tree across to Brown's Lane taking path O-Q-T. I do not recall the gate at Q being locked. We walked from T down the field along the tractor path and were never told we could not walk there.

**6.** Occasionally I used to go on path O-L across the top of the quarry. I think there was a stile. We were not told we couldn't go there.

**7.** Having used these routes for many years, we were never told we could not go there. We never thought that there was any problem walking and playing there and no-one ever told us not to. The grass on the field was quite regularly cut making the paths easy to access and we assumed that it was fine to go there until 2023 when new owners put up fences and notices closing off the old paths.

**8.** Reply to objections

**9**. Jones - She says in her 2nd paragraph; *countless issues with regards to public wandering, trespass with intent to vandalise, verbal abuse (mostly stemming from telling public and their often out of control dogs to get back on the FOOTPATH after blatantly ignoring signage) dog & human fouling, fires, littering & more serious fly tipping, fencing wire cut weekly by walkers to gain new access to PRIVATE LAND, wooden fencing steaks pulled out/ burnt/snapped*.
In my experience of walking these paths before 2023, I did not see any signage nor did I see evidence of vandalism, fires or fly tipping. We walked these paths because they were attractive, quiet and rural. We saw other walkers using the paths for exercise, to access the views from the hill and to walk up to Doverow Woods. We had no need to cut wires or pull up fences because the paths were clear across the fields.

**11.** Godsell: *Having visited these fields on foot over the last 40 years as neighbours, we can confirm that the footpaths in the field were very ill defined and it was difficult to maintain the correct route. Therefore, when members of the public were persuaded by Stonehouse Town Council to claim new paths, their suggested routes would not be able to be clearly marked on a map*.
What do they mean by the correct route? In my experience everyone used the two paths through the field J-O or M-O which I thought was the "correct route". They were well-defined and I would not call them "new paths" as they had been used for at least 60 years to my personal knowledge. It seems that GCC has managed to mark J-O and M-O clearly on the map.

**12.** Nagai: *J-O & M-O are also evidenced to have varied dramatically over the years, it is obvious the position of these claimed routes have not been consistent or in a fixed linear position*.

I don't think the evidence shows that the paths varied "dramatically". In my experience (from 1961) we followed one of two paths – the upper path across the slope of the hill or the lower path past the cattle trough.

**I confirm that the contents of this Proof of Evidence are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and are based upon my own personal experience.**

**Signature…**[redacted]**……** **Date……20/08/2026……**