

**Regarding the Degradation
of the River Idle Bank at
the foot of River Lane, Misson.**

1. This Paper

1.1 This paper shares some of the history of River Lane in the context of our community, and outlines the background to the current problem regarding the degradation of the River Idle Bank at the foot of River Lane, Misson. It seeks to update readers on action taken by Misson Parish Council towards finding a sustainable solution to the problem identified and described herein.

1.2 This is version 8.0 of this paper, having been shared between Parish Councillors, and iteratively amended until this final version was agreed.

2. River Lane

2.1 River Lane in the village of Misson is designated as a cul-de-sac and leads down to the River Idle. It is the only place where the public can access the River Idle from the village of Misson.

2.2 One of our current Parish Councillors recalls; “In my living memory, residents and the public have always had access to the River Idle from River Lane. I paddled there in flood water as a toddler, learnt to fish there, and learnt to canoe from River Lane as a Hayfield pupil with our PE class. Misson residents enjoy being by, in and on the river in many different water going crafts. River Lane offers the only access to the River Idle in Misson for members of the public and as such is precious to us all”.

2.3 Members of the public from within and outside Misson Parish have interest in River Lane. National canoe clubs have regularly shared its location with their members and dog walkers often come from outside the parish to enjoy a walk along the riverbank.

2.4 Misson Parish Council is well aware of the high regard the immediate and local community places on safe access to the river and the river bank. Misson Parish Council seeks to be the agency that can continue to facilitate the enjoyment of the river and the leisure pursuits it offers, and the current Parish Council is committed to both maintaining access to the River Idle via River Lane, as enjoyed by local residents for generations past, and preserving access for generations to come.

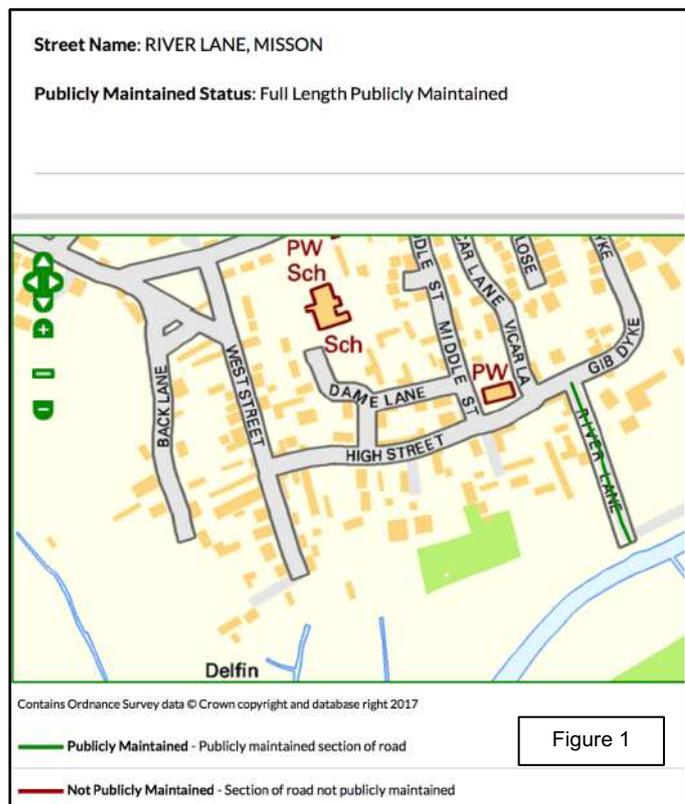


Figure 1

2.5 In the current review and update of Misson Neighbourhood Plan, it is proposed that the area at the foot of River Lane (described later at Figure 7) becomes ‘a designated local green space’, specifically to protect it as an area of interest that is valued by the community.

3. Agencies with interest in River Lane.

3.1 There are a range of agencies who have interest in River Lane;

- a) Bassetlaw District Council (which accesses the lane to empty the litter bin).
- b) Nottinghamshire County Council (which contracts Via East Midlands to maintain the public highway),
- c) Severn Trent Water (which is responsible for drainage),
- d) Anglian Water (which is responsible for water supply),
- e) Environment Agency (which monitors the river, riverbank, and flood defences, and uses River Lane to access the River Idle), and
- f) Misson Parish Council (which seeks to protect the physical environment of the riverbank and sustain the ability of the public to enjoy access to the River Idle from the end of River Lane).

3.2 Residents whose homes touch River Lane also have a legitimate interest in it, but do not have collective agency regarding it.

4. User Context

4.1 There is evidence to show that in the 18th Century, River Lane led to a ferry station where foot passengers would cross the river to access the villages of Misterton, Everton, and Gringley-on-the-Hill. In the 19th Century, the ferry is marked on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey Map of 1855 (see Figure 2). Facing the river, the property named Ferry Bungalow is on the right, and on the left is a Public Right of Way that extends the length of what is anecdotally acknowledged as the former Ferry Landing Stage. On the site of Ferry Bungalow previously stood The Ferry Boat Inn (see Figure 3).

4.2 River Lane is the only place where the public can access the River Idle from the village of Misson. There is a further access to the river, just north of Newington, from Hagg Lane, but this is not a formal access point. There are those in the community who can remember Misson Lido being along Hagg Lane (see the grainy pictures at Figure 4 overleaf), and Parish records show that Misson Parish Council once achieved a rental income from the ice-cream sellers in this location. River Lane and Hagg Lane are very popular walking destinations for local people, and the riverbank continues to be widely enjoyed, particularly during the summer months.

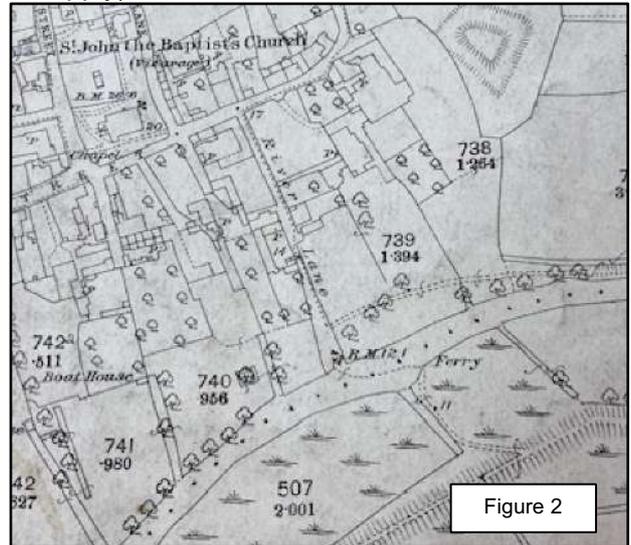


Figure 2

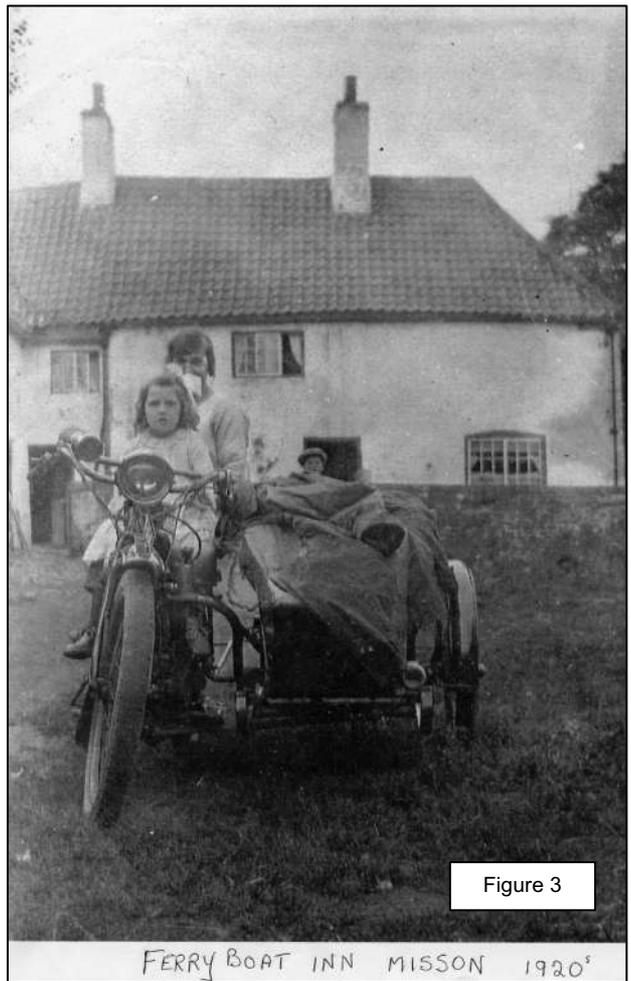


Figure 3

FERRY BOAT INN MISSON 1920^s



4.3 The houses on each side of River Lane are now all privately owned. In the present day, the lane is frequently used by dog walkers and fishermen, and also accessed by people who wish to launch boats on the River Idle. Though not equipped so to do, the end of River Lane is often used as both a launch and landing point. The removal of boats from the river, (launched elsewhere) can cause more damage than the launching of boats, as they are dragged out and up the bank, leaving a deep rut in the river bank.

4.4 In the 21st Century, residents report there has been anti-social behaviour and covert activity relating to the end of River Lane. The police are aware of substance abuse remnants left behind after some such visits. In recent years, residents have reported increased usage relating to visitors from outside Misson Parish who have used River Lane as a secluded place to drive, park up, and launch a rigid bottom dinghy late at night. Some residents who moor boats elsewhere on the river have also reported theft of items from their boats and even boats themselves. As recently as August 2023, residents discovered empty drug packets on the grass, damage occurring to a landowners fence, and much littering.

4.5 Casual users have caused damage to the land close to the river, as there is no turning area on River Lane. In order to launch boats, heavy vehicles have been turned close to the water's edge,



Figure 5

Photographs illustrating vehicular damage to the end of River Lane.

causing detriment to the riverbank. Equally, walkers have driven to the end of the lane and caused deep ruts. At certain times of year, the end of River Lane can become very muddy indeed (see figure 5 earlier). Local residents are well aware that River Lane is a cul-de-sac and usually take sensible precautions when using it with vehicles.

- 4.6 An informal group of local residents, known as Misson Marine Club, share an interest in boats moored on the river at an anchorage point further away from River Lane with the consent of the riparian owner at the location of Willow House. In previous years the members have used River Lane as a launch and landing point and have also created interest in this location as a result of an annual community fundraising event they lead, known locally as The Duck Race (see Figure 6, 2021). The members of this group have declared their willingness to help find a sustainable solution to the problem of riverbank degradation.



Figure 6

5. The Presenting Issue

- 5.1 River Lane in the village of Misson is designated as a cul-de-sac and leads down to the River Idle.
- 5.2 It is a public highway maintained by Nottinghamshire County Council, being a tarmacadam roadway that ends at Ferry Bungalow, then an unmetalled road down to the stile, and then rough grass from the stile to the water's edge. The Land Registry record shows the lane is a public highway as far as the stile. Beyond this, Nottinghamshire County Council Highways Adoption record shows the lane is an adopted highway all the way to the water's edge.
- 5.3 The water supply for Misson village comes from Everton, via a pipe under the River Idle. This has collapsed in recent years and sink holes have appeared in the unmetalled road. The water supply continues into Misson via a pipe under River Lane.
- 5.4 From the end of the unmetalled road to the river bank, the land is grassed (shown at Figure 7 and shaded pink). In recent years River Lane has flooded and subsequent erosion of the riverbank is significant.

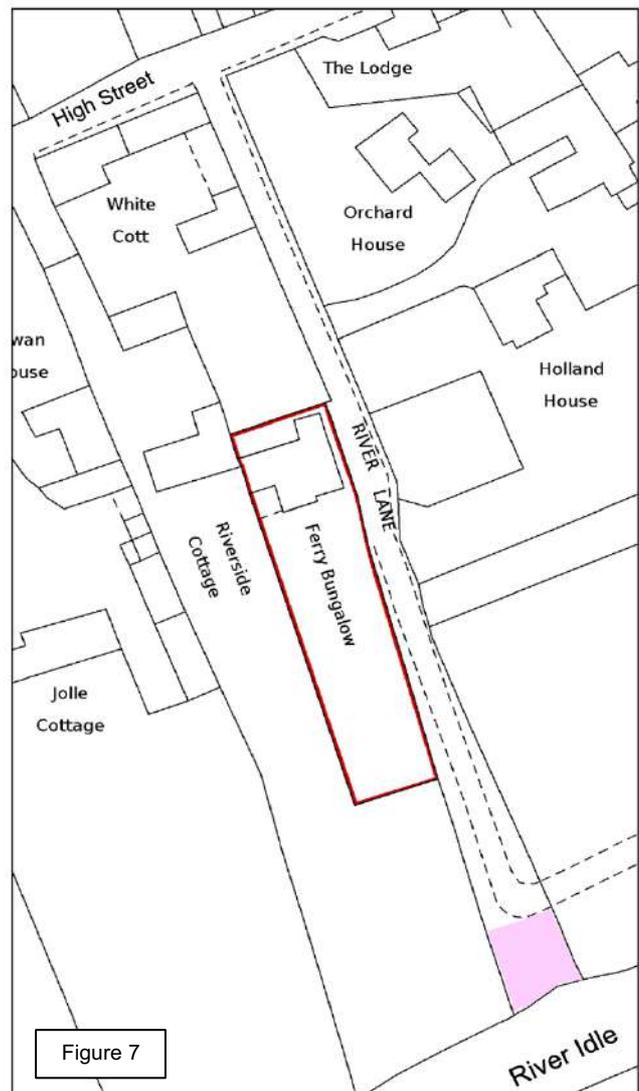


Figure 7

- 5.5 The villagers of Misson and users from other parts of Misson Parish have regularly reported degradation of the riverbank since 2017. Misson Parish Council has subsequently sought to shape an agreed plan to rebuild the riverbank and protect it from further degradation.
- 5.6 In 2018 Misson Parish Council declared its willingness to act as the agent to bring such a plan together, supported by the community interest group Misson Marine Club. Since then, Misson Parish Council has a clear record of effort to try and establish ownership of this bank in order to take steps to address the erosion.
- 5.7 When the river breached its banks in 2019, the flood waters behaved more or less as predicted by the Environment Agency. The banks were breached and water flooded beyond the stile at the end of River Lane (see Figure 8 below).



- 5.8 Erosion has become an increasing problem that is impacting the status of the riverbank as the land breaks away. As our flood defence, it is important that our river banks, including River Lane, are stable, and do not erode or break away in flood conditions (see Figure 9 below).



- 5.9 The riverbank at the end of River Lane has also continued to erode. Figure 10 (overleaf) is illustrative of the amount of bank that had broken away by the beginning of 2020. The original banking once met with the land shown in the bottom left of the picture, but has systematically been degraded to create the basin seen here. Since then, with careful management, the reed bed has increased and the riverbank has begun to show signs of recovery. However, unless a sustainable solution is found, annual summer activity at the rivers edge will simply return the riverbank to it's previously eroded state.

5.10 The first action has been to establish ownership of the land (shown at Figure 7) which is currently unregistered. Misson Parish Council contacted all of the property owners in the vicinity of River Lane and has established that none of them have ownership of, nor an interest in, the portion of land from the stile to the river bank.



6. Record of Solution Options Considered and Progress Made.

6.1 The following information is included to show the full record of research and action taken to effect a sustainable solution to arrest the degradation of the land at the end of River Lane and protect access to the River Idle from this location.

6.2 In November 2020 Misson Parish Council, having taken legal advice about how to gain control of the land in order to effect a sustainable solution, erected a sign which reads; "Misson Parish Council is now maintaining this area" (Figure 11). Since July 2020, Misson Parish Council Lengthsmen have regularly strimmed the area in a way, during winter, to promote biodiversity and help the river bank develop a strong root system, and then in summer, with a wider path strimmed from the area level with the stile and leading to the river bank edge. Leaving the vegetation high each side has successfully discouraged drivers taking vehicles on and down the bank. This has allowed the reeds to successfully restore themselves and begin building up silt to reform the bank. However, during the summer months, some residents



prefer a wider access to the riverbank, and so the area has been strimmed from side to side by members of the community. This highlights the need to agree a sustainable solution, as cutting the bank too aggressively could leave it vulnerable to further damage.

6.3 Throughout this time, dialogue has progressed with the interested agencies concerned to try and find a solution to the degrading riverbank situation. The Environment Agency and Anglian Water need regular access to the river in order to track the quality of the water and the riverbank, and to carry out maintenance to our drains and water supply. They advised that the vehicles they use to carry out works are narrower than a domestic car and suggested a pair of locking bollards might be used to prevent other vehicles accessing the riverbank as a car park or turning area. Their own vehicles would be able to pass through the gap and so retain unimpeded access to that location and the river in order to carry out their responsibilities. The suggestion was that the Parish Clerk might hold the keys to the bollards and see that they were lowered whenever there was legitimate need for community access.

6.4 In early 2019 this solution option was raised with the Senior Highways Officer of NCC. She said that she could not support such a scheme as any vehicles accessing the lane accidentally, would then have no option but to reverse the length of the narrow road, which she believed was hazardous to road safety.

- 6.5 The Parish Council continued to research solution options. In late 2019 it was considered that the classification of River Lane as a Highway might be reclassified as a By-way. However, that was not acceptable to NCC who indicated that the responsibility for maintenance of River Lane would be impacted, and it was NCC's responsibility to maintain the lane as a Public Highway.

7. Ownership of the land.

- 7.1 In June 2023, the Parish Clerk made a formal enquiry to the Land Registry to register interest in the land marked in pink at Figure 7, and ask to be considered for first registration of ownership. If first registration was not possible, then the Council asked that a caution against first registration might be noted on the register. This would give Misson Parish Council an insurable interest in the land, to add to the Council's Public Liability Insurance Policy. At the time of writing, no formal response has yet been received by the Parish Clerk.
- 7.2 Should first registration of the land prove possible, a risk assessment will be undertaken to establish the liabilities, rewards and costs involved in MPC acquiring ownership of the land. The results of such an appraisal would enable Parish Councillors to make informed decisions on the options going forward.
- 7.3 Misson Parish Council can show the necessary evidence of having used resources paid for with taxpayers precept funds to regularly maintain this land. Demonstrating such investment in protection and preservation of the land is an important factor in claiming ownership. Once ownership is achieved, MPC would then have the legitimate right to take steps, agreed with other interested agencies, to implement a sustainable solution to prevent further erosion of the riverbank.

8. Summary

- 8.1 There is an agreed problem with the land at the very end of River Lane that is impacting the status of the riverbank and causing the land to break away.
- 8.2 Since 2018, much progress has been made to bring interested agencies together to agree a sustainable solution. Additionally, a number of proposed solutions have been examined and appropriately discarded because of negative impact to the general public.
- 8.3 Misson Parish Council is now seeking first registration of ownership of the land and has made enquiry to the Land Registry for this. If ownership can be achieved, MPC would then have the legitimate right to take steps, agreed with other interested agencies, to implement a sustainable solution to prevent further erosion of the riverbank.
- 8.4 Misson Parish Council would consult with the wider community before a final solution was agreed.

4th October 2023

Paper prepared and edited
by Dr Mandy Walker for
Misson Parish Council