

GROUPS

BRISTOL

Richard Tallon, Tel: 0249 715426
2nd Monday, Tennis Court Inn, Deanery Road (A420), Kingswood

CAMBRIDGE

Howard Biddle, Tel: 0223 232879
1st Thursday, Golden Ball, Boxworth

CHESHIRE

J. Johnson, Tel: 061 427 6963
2 & 4 Monday, The Robin Hood, Buxton Road, High Lane, Hazel Grove, Stockport

CORNWALL

Roger Fogg, Tel: 0726 67198
3rd Thursday, London Inn, Summercourt (A30)

CUMBRIA

Roger Harris, Tel: 0539 725198
2nd Wednesday, Albert Hotel, Bowness on Windermere

DERBYSHIRE & SOUTH YORKSHIRE

David Bonsall, Tel: 0742 748688
2 & 4 Tuesday, The Old Crown Inn, Handsworth Road, Sheffield

DEVON

Martin Cooper, Tel: 0752 337491
2nd Tuesday, The Welcome Stranger, Bickington, Nr. Newton Abbott

DORSET

Pete Boyce, Tel: 0305 783210
1st Tuesday, The Royal Oak, Bere Regis

EAST MIDLANDS

Graham Chinnery, Tel: 0332 863433
2nd Wednesday, Three Horseshoes, Hemmington, Nr. M1 Junct. 24

EAST SCOTLAND

Les Mollison, Tel: 0382 738530
2nd Wednesday, Glencarse Hotel, A85, Perth to Dundee Rd

ESSEX

Neil Gamble, Tel: 0245 461643
4th Tuesday, The White Horse, Old London Road, Widford, Chelmsford

GLOUCESTER

Ron Carter, Tel: 045 382 2707
1st Tuesday, Painswick Institute, Painswick, Glos.

HERTFORDSHIRE

Alan Vincent, Tel: 0923 775263
1st Wednesday, The Coach & Horses, Newgate Street, Near Cuffly

ISLE OF WIGHT

Mick Holbrook, Tel: 0983 866361
Last Thursday, Liberal Club, Longford Rd, Shanklin, I.O.W

KENT

Nick Moon, Tel: 0322 862855
2nd Tuesday, Pied Bull, Farningham, Nr. Brands Hatch

LANCASHIRE

Keith Westley, Tel: 0704 893215
1st Tuesday, Hindshead Pub on A49, Charnock Richard

LINCOLNSHIRE

Alan Wilkinson, Tel: 0529 60793
4th Thursday, The Mall, Woodhall, Spar

LODDON VALE

Don Lewis, Tel: 0252 616359
2nd Thursday, The Lamb, Theale, Berkshire

NORFOLK & SUFFOLK

- To be Advised
NORTH MIDLANDS

NORTHUMBRIA

Ray Morse, Tel: 0785 661543
1st Tuesday, Leek Area - Contact group rep (above)

NORTH WALES

Dave Vaughan, Tel: 091 529 3202
3rd Tuesday, Ryton Rugby Club, Ryton
John Mills, Tel: 0477 34425
1st Wednesday, Hope & Anchor, Ewloe Place, Buckley, Chwydd

SHROPSHIRE

Steve Rodenhurst, Tel: 0952 244161
2nd & last Wednesday, The Bell, Crosshouses, Shrewsbury

SOMERSET

Nick Crocker, Tel: 093589 261
Last Thursday, The Globe Inn, Somerton

SOUTHERN

Pete Wildsmith, Tel: 0703 617582
3rd Wednesday, The Priory Inn, Bishops Waltham, Hampshire

SOUTH LONDON & SURREY

Brian Wright, Tel: 081 669 4214
9pm Every Wednesday, Epsom & Ewell F.C., West St, Ewell

SUSSEX

Bevis Billingham, Tel: 0243 585128
Last Thursday, Selsey Arms, Coolham, Junct. A272, B2193

TEESIDE & NORTH YORKS

Leo Crone, Tel: 0325 380117
1st & 3rd Wednesday, Queens Head, Stokesley

THAMES VALLEY

Bob Williams, Tel: 0990 24958
3rd Monday, District Arms, Woodthorpe Road, Ashford, Middlesex

WEST ANGLIA

David Knight, Tel: 0933 313816
1 & 3 Thursday, Scott Bader Clubhouse, Opp. Parish Church, Woolaston, Wellingborough

WEST MIDLANDS

Dennis Hayter, Tel: 0527 23550
1 & 3 Thursday, Wilmcote Mens Club, Wilmcote, Nr. Stratford on Avon

WEST WALES

G. Jones, Tel: 0239 810255 - Meets to be arranged
SOUTH WALES (WTRA), Bill Kershaw, Tel: 0633 895241

WEST YORKSHIRE

Gary Watson, Tel: 0836 696686 (Mobile)
1 & 3 Thursday, Bankfoot Cricket Club, Wickets Close, (off Cleckheaton Rd.), Odsal, Bradford

WILTSHIRE

Bill Riley, Tel: 02216 3811
1st Tuesday, The Toll House, Holt, Trowbridge

WYVERN

Gwyn James, Tel: 0902 763824
Every Thursday, Hill & Cakemore Ex-Servicemen's Club,



TRAIL

JUNE 1991

No. 155

The Bulletin of the TRF, the National Club for all who wish to ride Legal Motorcycles on Legal Carriageways.

EDITOR: Mike "Nettlebed" Pedley.



TLR & IZH 340 above Malham Tarn - North Yorkshire.

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Try to make it interesting!

All contributions to the Editor

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EDITOR

As you read this I am again on holiday or perhaps more accurately, on my way home from the Isle of Man TT races. For those who have not sampled the Islands trails I can only inform you that they offer an enormous variety from bogs to rock steps and everything in between. Furthermore, its highly refreshing to ride where the locals are pro-bikes and the horse and motor-cycle enjoy similar status in the countryside.

May has seemed a rather empty month for me as far as trail riding is concerned. Two Sundays were taken up with the Classic Bike Show and the BMF rally, and of course no John Ebbrell Memorial run again and I did not even go to the Scottish Six Days.

I gather that the JEMR is 'missed' by a lot of you out there, particularly the Southern lads who really seemed to enjoy a weekend in the North especially when it was so well organised by Ken Canham-who even managed to summon up the good weather.

Is there any group out there who would be prepared to revive the JEMR on say a one year only basis? Apart from the AGM its our only real get together and for that reason alone, worth reviving.

The Byways and Bridleways Trust (BBT) was mentioned in our last issue, but what about the Open Spaces Society? I confess I did not know of its existence until the other week, whilst speeding up to the Lakes for a days riding I heard an appeal on behalf of the Open Space Society on Radio 4's "This Week's Good Cause". I did not pay too much attention until the words 'green lane' were mentioned. Do we liaise with this group? Can anyone give us a little more information-for it appears that the Society will work to protect open spaces and rights of way from those who would attempt to withdraw our legal rights.

Finally, on a slightly more serious note, ever had any serious injuries whilst trail riding? Broken bones, bad gashes etc.? Thankfully, they are few and far between but we have had one or two in the Lancs Group. If a rider broke his arm would you know what to do until professional help arrived? Could you stem the bleeding from a deep cut? No, then why not organise a first-aid course for a few of your leaders - or better still why not train the ones who turn-up on every ride, but refuse to ever lead a run. Courses are organised in most areas by the St. John's Ambulance Brigade at modest cost. The life it saves could be yours.

NETTLEBED

P.S. The fact that you are reading this magazine means that "The Team" actually managed to produce this mag completely without my help - Well done lads.

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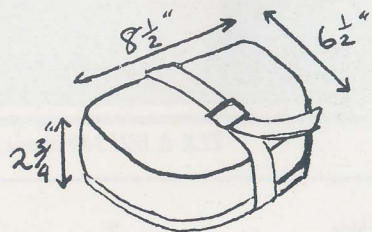
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LETTERS

Trail Riding in a National Park

Not normally a recommended pursuit this, if only on the grounds of illegality and assumed inappropriateness, but for three days in May twelve South West TRF members found themselves doing just this. Under the inspired leadership (even if he did keep all of the meal vouchers to himself...) of South West TRF man Peter Banks riders from Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset converged on the village of Exford deep in Exmoor National Park to assist the British Horse Society (BHS) with the premier British long distance horse ride, The Golden Horse Shoe Ride. This is rather like an equestrian enduro with a hundred plus horses covering a 50 mile course on the first day and then riding it in the reverse direction on the second day. The BHS "use" the TRF to mark and Marshal this route. The route must be a trail riders ultimate fantasy (?), with only a couple of tarmac miles the rest is a mixture of open moorland, stoney tracks, steep climbs and deep watery crossings. This probably tells you that it was not with too much martyrdom that we volunteered for the task.

Arriving in Exford late in a steaming car armed with only some of the essentials of being a team member (I had bought a very nice lump hammer though...this wonderful tool was to later in the day detonate my tin of Tyreweld much to the bewilderment of downwind riders) I rapidly assessed that this was to be no picnic...(after all, Peter Banks had the meal vouchers...) we had to tape and stake the whole route as required and there was a display of Russian horses, I could probably have eaten one mind...Some of us probably hardly saw a horse for the three days! We were dispatched in four groups to commence route marking. Aply led by Nick Crocker on a very peculiar Honda, Cornwall set off North to meet Devon at about quarter way. While Devon were being baffled by featureless moorland (you shouldn't have taped the sheep lads) we were plunging down steep sided Coombes and climbing steeply out of their airlessness to the fresh air of the moors above. TRF members seem particularly fascinated by water and whilst Martin Cooper's ability to find and ride maniacally through any water source available may be invaluable for drought hit regions, Peter Boyce discovered that the total immersion technique of bike washing is not a good idea. Tony Stuart being quite smart really gallantly laid beneath his Honda to save it the same fate, it was probably better than the Youth Hostel washing facilities anyway...Tieing orange tape to trees and gates as we went we eventually (zzz) met Devon and returned to base to stake our half of the course. Thank goodness one of us was prepared, Cornwall's Tony having brought TWO bikes and a four wheel drive...all of which were to prove invaluable by Tuesday night. Carrying stakes on a bike is fine if you have a) sufficient luggage elastics and b) sufficient brain to remember that your bike is now four feet wide. All I can say is "sorry Nick" and "good job I wasn't going faster". The course was staked by 8 o'clock and we all checked into the BHS provided Hotel. The Youth Hostel.. I had been dreading having to share a room with five strange women (funny how the others wouldn't have found this

a problem.) but fortunately only landed one...and a bus load of school children. Aaarrrghh. Too tired to care I climbed into my YHA regulation strait jacket and slept.

Monday was the first day of the event and we were on the course checking markers by 7.15am in advance of the horses who started at 8. I have to admit that Cornwall minus one and Devon's Paul were caught up by two horses. The shame of it. I blame Paul for sitting around on the side of a steep, steep coombe admiring the gradient and the roots and cursing. Strange behaviour. Other team members rode the course after the last horse while the others dealt with a very distressed horse and had to muster and transport vets and so forth. Breathless stuff. Some of us however drew a very short straw and had to spend three hours sat in the sun by a river manning (personally?) a broken gate. The river kept the beer cool and it was jolly hard work. Honest lads.

Tuesday saw a new group in front of the horses checking the route, obviously faster they weren't caught by the equines, but maybe they didn't have the problems that we had...we found a couple of instances of tapes just disappearing (ramblers or sheep?) and one where someone had taken our tapes down and "re-routed" the course in the opposite direction. Disappointed by human nature here, we were pleasantly surprised by the response of the horse riders to us, largely friendly and grateful and walkers we met were interested and receptive to us, the value of this as a PR exercise was enormous. But we can't pretend that we did it just for this! To do three days riding over Exmoor's bridleways, to ride right up Dunkerry Beacon, past Larkbarrow, through Forestry Commission land and to ride the countless nadgery tracks was reward enough...though perhaps collecting all of the orange tape and stakes back again wasn't quite such fun. Dorset and Somerset members tie tape with a vengeance and a step ladder, or maybe it was the height advantage provided by those XR Hondas...

The ride had been hard on the horses, very few finished successfully and passed the vet check. It was hard on the bikes too and I wouldn't have passed the vet check. The latest score on sick bikes that I heard was Honda 2 Kawasaki 2. I think we'd all do it again (statistically it may be a good idea not to use a Honda or a Kawasaki though...) I know that I would and coming from one who thought that there was only one six o'clock in the day, that beds were never less than 3 feet wide and that half a days trail riding is quite sufficient, that is praise indeed.

I have only one problem. Was Peter Banks REALLY the only member not to fall off in the 3 days or is there an official cover-up?....

SALLY MADGWICK (Cornwall)

(Let's hopethat we can look forward to some similar assistance from the equine community, should we ever need it. Ed.)

GROUP NEWS

LOCAL RIDING WITH THE WYVERN GROUP

The Wyvern TRF are fortunate, at least for an urban headquartered Group, in the amount of trail riding right on our doorstep. We are based in the Black country, meeting within ten miles of the centre of Birmingham; yet on the Western flank of the huge West Midlands built up area, in a triangle between Wolverhampton, Bridgnorth and Bewdley, within a twenty square mile space, there is a good morning of riding on a wide variety of trails

If we cross the River Severn this soon becomes a day and by carrying on out further West to the Clees, the Welsh border, and on into Wales, then it can easily turn into days. On an only slightly damp Sunday morning in mid April we held a typical run.

Meeting at seven o'clock (we-well, at least I, and I was the run leader - like early starts) the group set out from the A449 over a fenced gravel road, across the canal, and up into the Million forest; not exactly your real Welsh forest, but quite a lot of trees, and they are pines.

From here a bit of a zig zag, along to a Sandy Lane a UCR near Kinver, then to the series of lanes which lead us through the Enville Estate. We like this section. It has ancient sunken, tree lined lanes, nice boggy bits, a ploughed field to cross, a dodgy stream crossing, fights through shrubbery, all that interesting sort of stuff.

Unfortunately the Estate is beginning to flex its restrictive muscles. Last time, after riding through freely for more than thirteen years we were stopped, told it was verboten, never anything but a private road and all that sort of stuff. We are convinced that this is the sort of stuff bulls excrete, but it's going to be pretty hard to prove.

It's all there on the old Ordnance Survey, but we can't find anything more; Tithes maps aren't at Shrewsbury, Hereford or Lichfield and what we can trace in the County Records Office, though it shows some outlines, doesn't define them.

Still, we weren't stopped today and so carry on past the Mill at Alverley, over towards the village across fields to our favourite stream bed canyon. It's getting choked with fallen trees and soon we will have to resort to chain saws as the fun versus difficulty equation goes against us. There is an ever increasing rock step on the path out as well. Soon it will be quite a challenge; some say it already is.

We move to a series of easy lanes parallel to the main Bridgnorth road. Part of the old turnpike, if you like history.

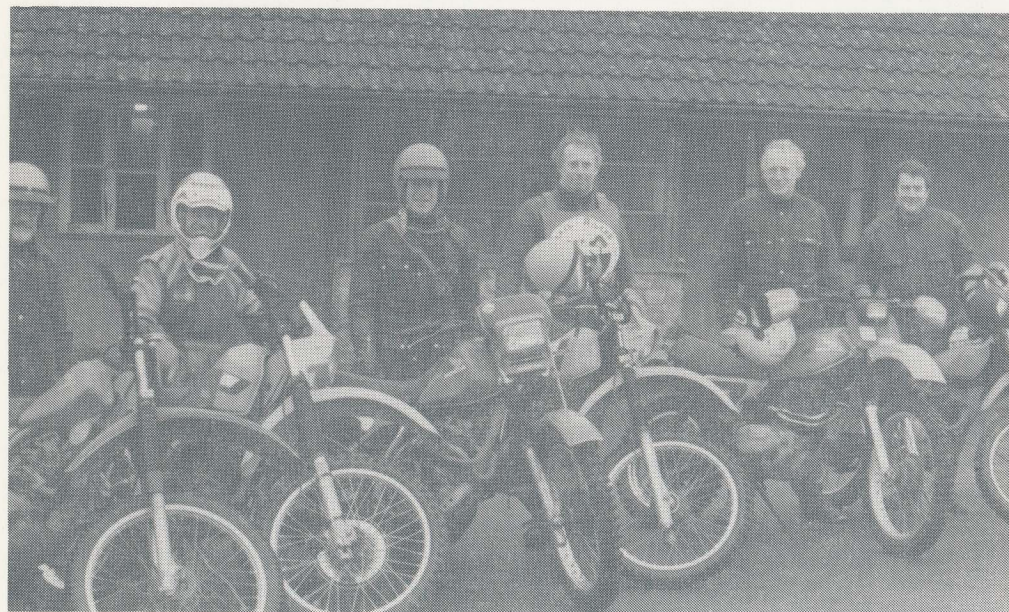
The first bit was unilaterally locked off by the adjacent farmer, who refused to budge for a long time, despite the council, and advice from the NFU. In the end he had to give up, and now, in revenge, I think this will be one of the few Byways recommended in the area. After rejoining the main road for a while, we turn off right along what is now shown only as a footpath, but there is a road clear as day on the First Edition. Turn right at the hamlet of Mose, along another track, left and right over tarmac, then we're bouncing through a long ford near Quatt. One time we came upon a guy with an old one tonne Mercedes truck on its side here. He was setting up a winch, didn't need any assistance, and wasn't causing any damage, at least this time. We are not over enthralled by 4 wheel drives, but I suppose we would have helped if he'd really wanted it.

I'm only half way through the run, but since the Magazine encourages shorter articles I'd better end it now - the description, not the ride; that went on for another two hours!

STEVE PIGHILLS, WYVERN TRF



TRF Bristol Group lane clearance party - Wiltshire, March 1991.



TRF Gloucester Group 'RIDE ON MENDIP', February 1991.
Leader: Gwyn Thomas.

Once upon a time, Quicksands were a terrifying mystery. Some areas of wet sand, in a river estuary for example, were safe to ride (horses) on and only yards away could be similar looking parts that would swallow up the unwary and let off few survivors. The condition we now know is caused by water flowing through the sand rather than being static in it. How to deal with it:

- a) Keep moving in one direction.
- b) Create as little ground pressure as possible. - Best to lay down and roll.

Now, let's get down to our element - mud, very rarely "quick" fortunately, although I do know a handful of mantraps in Yorkshire! Mud comes in many forms, I know, I farm. The most frustrating kind for me, as I see least of it is the sticky stuff in the Cotswolds. It gums up the wheels and stops them turning unless the mudguards are 4" clear. Be warned if you intend to visit the Golden Valley.

My name, Carr (Kerr in Scotland), a common enough name in the North East, was a Danish Viking word meaning marsh or bog. This doesn't make me an expert, but there's a lot of it about, not so much in the valleys now that draining and tarmac has taken its toll. Hillside ascents in the main are on tried and tested hard-bottomed routes now, but there are many miles of level-ish, peaty, water-logged moorland rights-of-way that we either dread or relish, but certainly remember.

How do we deal with this hazard and still go home wanting to come out and do it again? I use two bikes regularly, both have valve engines, which may not give the wheelie potential of a modern "stink-wheel" with a power valve, but they have manageable characteristics at middle and lower engine speeds. One is a TLR 200, light, low and very forgiving, but un-comfortable over big distances. The other an XT350, useful 'grunt', not so light, not so low but as comfortable as watching telly. Both are docile and make the right noises, though not a lot and are generally economic on fuel.

To get across our soft moorland a small bike has the advantage that it needn't cut in so deep and is easier to manhandle when it becomes desperate. Bigger bikes have the benefit of higher inertia and ability to pull a higher gear, but where are your friends when it's buried up to the bars? It's this last point that makes me think forward and look for the line least likely to fail.

Disturbing vegetation is bad news, aim from one strongly growing patch to another across your problem area. Take account of levels and let gravity help you, even a little bit downhill is better than the same amount up. You must ride straight and upright, weight well back on the bike, pull as high a gear as you dare and go for it, - "faint hearts never won fair ladies"! If forward motion stops, don't sit there and rev it, the back wheel will disappear vertically downwards. The clever thing to do is to get your weight off the bike before an inevitable stop and stagger on alongside without losing your wellies, keep the thing vertical and the engine gently driving the back wheel. Now do you see why I prefer my 4 stroke?

If you're totally pessimistic of getting across with a leg on each side of your bike, why not earn Brownie points by walking it across all the way in bottom gear, clutch home, not much power on

bike vertical and keep moving. This is my ultimate method if I see pale green sphagnum moss coming towards me. It's usually a very tender surface, keep off it if you can, it's the nearest thing to quicksand as sphagnum prefers non-stagnant water, even in good weather when everywhere else is dry.

If you are committed to go over a well worn ditch or narrow stream crossing that has deep, wheel side grooves straight across that look like stoppers, it can be worth crossing diagonally. In effect you're riding the high edges of the ruts as they cross the ditch, you must be quite quick. Don't say I told you if you can't make it work, get up and have another go.

If you're going to be stuck in a swamp, how will you get out? First of all it's good to have someone with you who won't disappear away over the horizon at the critical time. Second, it's better to be on a bike with a handle firmly fixed somewhere behind the seat. A gang with a rope works wonders, the rope works best round both stantions (fork legs) below the steering head, rather than at handle bar height. If you have to escape with very little help, it may be better to lay the thing on its side and drag it sideways a couple of feet, than stand it up on better muck than you've been fast in, now roll it either backwards or forwards whichever is the more downhill, and you're away!

I've actually rolled it over and over sideways on my own to get away from soft black peat, but only once, about 30 years ago when I was young and daft.

You won't accelerate in mud, all your speed needs to be on early, but then you may get grip by rolling power off. If you need to change gear in mud you're doing it wrong, also to change direction is a mistake. Now go out and hop a bog. Win a fair lady.

Gordon Carr. West Yorks

This month's Wayside Scrap

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FAST - Old English for Stuck or Tight.

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Here is some good news from Essex. John Fowler writes: The council have been diligently carrying out their statutory duties to review the status of all RUPPs in the county. The last batch came to the Public Inquiry because residents and landowners objected to the draft orders for upgrade to Byway. Essex TRF went to the Inquiry in support of the council's position. Lo and behold when the Inspector's report and conclusions were published he overturned all our evidence and recommended downgrading to Bridleway en masse. The inspector was fairly hostile to the council's representatives and appeared to base his conclusions on 1968 type suitability, wilful challenging of council RoW competence, and misdirection in law.

The result was a blow, since it knocked out a major proportion of the RUPP network in North Essex. The council washed their hands of the affair and declined to take the issue to appeal. After looking at the local Fighting Fund (none) Essex TRF decided that natural justice called for action, so we lodged an appeal without knowing how it would be conducted or how much it would cost.

After contacting numerous people for advice and guidance, we nailed together the bones of an appeal and opted for making direct representation rather than a written submission. We called on Alan Kind to provide the necessary "Expert and Authoritative" interpretation and evidence, to quote the Inspector. I supported with additional historical, user and cartographic evidence. At the end of the day's appeal, we felt we had done our best and sat back to wait.

NOW, THE GOOD NEWS ! Now nearly 13 months later we have the report and conclusions. The Inspector has overturned his Inquiry findings and confirmed the original Essex CC orders to classify all the RUPPS as Byways. A great success. The final report makes an interesting comparison with the original.

There is a useful lesson in this case for all TRF groups: NEVER GIVE UP!

My advice in such matters is-

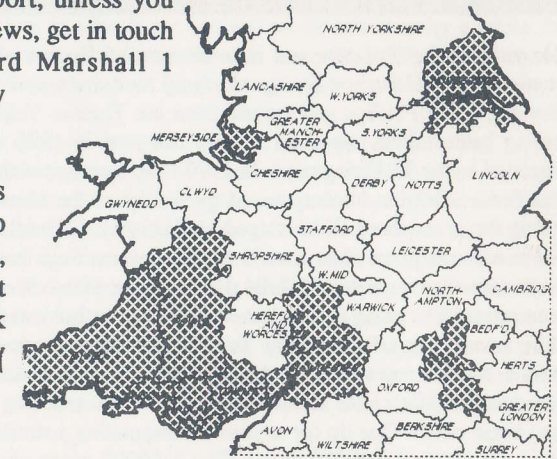
1. Do not be overwhelmed by the Inquiry report if it goes against legal logic and commonsense, force an appeal.
2. Do not rely on the Council for any assistance before or during the appeal.
3. Address the specific reasons in the report which identify how the conclusion was reached.
4. Get outside assistance from an expert if needed.
5. Don't ever submit a written appeal.

The whole process cost Essex TRF about £40 plus a good deal of time and effort, for a very worthwhile result. Our legal network is now more than 10% greater than it might have been, thanks in particular to Bill Riley, John Higgin, and David Edgar. Principal credit must go to Alan Kind who did a most professional demolition job on the Inspector while leaving him room to drop his earlier conclusions.

In addition to his work in Essex, John Fowler has offered to help in Oxfordshire.

Black holes are in the news again and the good news is that they are slowly disappearing. These areas are still not covered by volunteer support, unless you know different. If you have better news, get in touch this very instant with - Richard Marshall 1 Burlington Close, Breaston, Derby DE7 3UB, phone 03317 3416

This will ensure that local councils send out details of RoW changes to the people who need it most, meaning YOU! No name, no direct information. Keep up the good work all those who have kindly volunteered for this important task.



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Finally after the commercial, how nice to hear from Brian Thompson again, but how sad that he feels he can't keep up with his local lads. Perhaps if we all rode eighty cc models there would be no need to mention a speed limit in our code of conduct! Seriously, what you need, Brian, is a model with real valves, and a bit more swept volume. Has anyone out there got a half-way decent TLR or an XL185 to spare? If Brian doesn't want it I know someone who does....

It will soon be the AGM, so get thinking about how we all might improve.

TIM STEVENS

Do you hanker after new and little-used trails? Do you wish to trail ride where motorcyclists are made welcome? Do you like good, cheap food and wine? Why not try trail riding in France? Peter Bondar, Clive Phillips and myself from the Thames Valley TRF went to the Ardennes over the spring bank-holiday weekend in May last year. In 1988 we had organised a run to Normandy as reported in the TRF magazine. In 1990 Peter nominated the Ardennes. The Ardennes is located on the Franco-Belgian border around the valley of the Meuse River. The Ardennes is notorious for being the area where Hitler staged his last major offensive on the Western front in WWII. There are many war grave sites around the whole area from both world wars. The area is well forested with deep river valleys with hills rising to over 400m. So, while not exactly the Alps, the terrain is interesting. The going was rather easy as the weather was sunny and dry. Outside the summer time, things could get rather muddy. To plan the route we used the 1:50000 and 1:100000 IGN maps, which are the equivalent of the OS maps. Our proposed route was based around the Grandes Randonees (GRs). GRs should be used with discretion as they are primarily intended for walkers and horse riders. One tip for anyone contemplating a similar excursion is that GRs are only marked as such on the 1:100000 maps. The 1:50000 maps show more detail, but you still need the 1:100000 maps to determine where the GRs go. Not all GRs are shown on the larger scale maps either.

We had decided to use Charlesville-Mesieres as a base. Peter booked the local Campanile for us - these are a chain of basic but clean motels around France. On the Wednesday before the Bank holiday weekend we loaded a trailer up with three bikes; all Kawasaki - two new KDXs and some last minute route planning. For some reason we were carrying two complete sets of new tyres as well as assorted spares and tools. The weight of all this plus my 15 stone odd conspired to slow Peter (who was driving) down a little, to well under his usual 100mph average. Clive sensibly decided to travel in his girlfriend's VW Golf with two camp followers - one of whom he claimed was his ongoing meaningful relationship. After an uneventful trip (except for a Renault ablaze on the Autoroute hard shoulder), we arrived at the motel and unloaded the bikes. We were ready and rested on the Friday to start riding.

I had previously been voted in as the run leader as I had purchased the maps. Unfortunately I had also lost the compass! We decided to head in a westerly direction from our base. The country in this direction was well-cultivated with long and well-defined tracks. The going was dry clay, somewhat similar to some of the tracks in the Thames Valley area. It was hot and sunny the whole day, but we did manage to force down a four course meal at lunchtime.

We also started to find two hour lunch breaks a civilised habit. There was no sign of other recreational users at all. On the Saturday we headed in a northerly direction towards the fortress of Rocroi near the Belgian border and along the Meuse valley itself. The country was rather more forested and hilly. The scenery here was wonderful, reminiscent of the Lake District, with the addition of several picturesque chateaux. Some of the GRs in this area were restricted specifically to walkers and horse riders, so we had several unplanned detours.

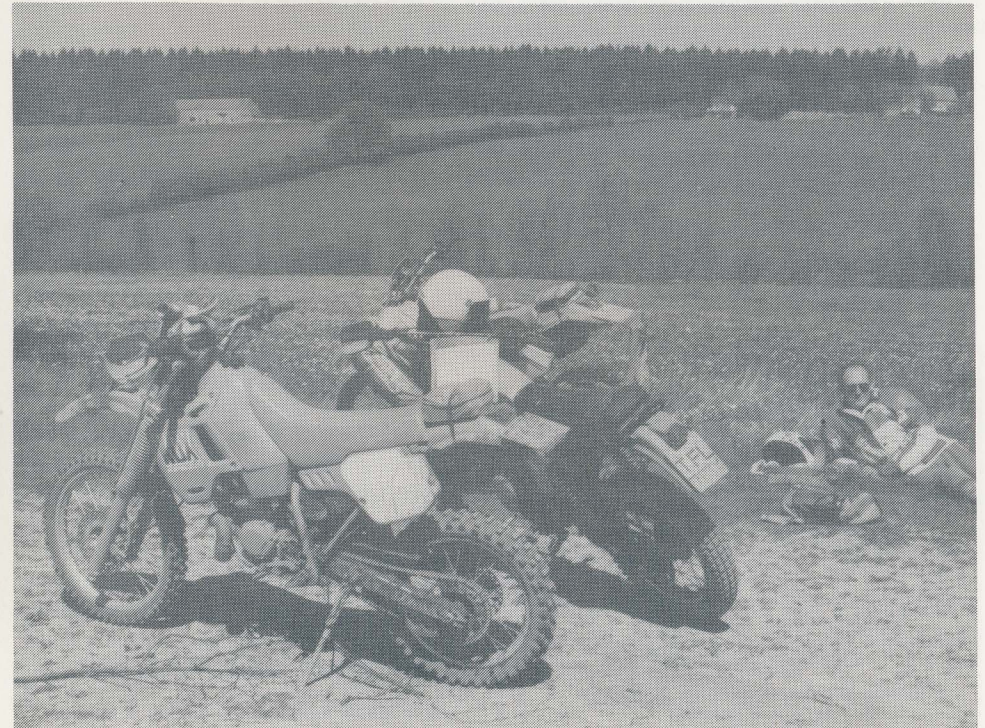
The third day we headed north-east towards the Belgian border, along the Semois valley, which is a tributary of the Meuse. There was a lot of forestry work here, often with few clues as to the correct route to follow. On one track the border there was a sign requesting vehicular users to respect the right of others. Just after this sign we came across some four-wheel drive vehicles coming uphill to admire the view down the valley. We had lunch at a cafe in les Hautes Rivieres in Belgium, where the beer is cheaper and better than France. We then made our way back to France

via some forestry tracks - still GRs. The highlight was a river crossing over the Semois which was some 60 yards wide at the ford and three feet deep. There was also a swift current in places and elsewhere green weed. The locals thought we were mad, but we made it across without any early baths - though Peter's KDX took fright when its wheels got wet and would not start for a while. It was so hot that I took off my helmet and jacket and sat in the river to cool off. We headed south again and had an ice cream on the border with one foot in France and the other in Belgium.

Unfortunately right on the border a house claimed the track we were on as private property, so we had to take evasive action. We then became thoroughly bushwacked (especially as I had mislaid the compass). Eventually Peter found a way out through a logging camp, and we rode back to the motel. Monday was spent driving back and trying to find a supermarket that was open to stock up with goodies. We managed to miss the ferry again as had happened two years before, and we had to wait for the next one! In summary, we had no problems with border crossings and no hassles about trail riding. There were enough tracks that we did not explore for at least two more days riding. We saw few signs of other vehicle users except in areas that were being logged. It was well worth the expense, and yes we did take all those tyres and spares back with us - except for one brake return spring. If anyone wishes to give it a try, please get in contact with me. Our next trip will probably be the Pyrenees!

Subsequent to this trip, I have heard rumors that the French are thinking of following the Germans and banning all off-road vehicles from GRs (except for farm and logging vehicles).

Bob Williams Thames Valley



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LARA REPORT

The National Parks Review Panel was appointed by the Countryside Commission in December 1989, under the chairmanship of Professor Ron Edwards, to advise on how the conservation and public enjoyment of the national parks should be achieved in the decades ahead. Their report is the first major appraisal of the needs of the national parks in England and Wales since the report of the Sandford Committee in 1974.

After looking at the key attributes that make the national parks such special places, and setting out a vision for the future, the Panel's work took them into such fields as environmental conservation, recreation, agriculture, forestry, rural development and housing, planning, the contribution of the voluntary sector, and the administration and financing of the national park authorities.

The Review Panel has produced a detailed and comprehensive report, with a total of 170 recommendations. Comprehensively illustrated and packed with information, it is essential reading for everyone with an interest in the future of our national parks.

A Report Prepared for LARA by Geoff Wilson (TRF)

POINTS TO NOTE FOR MOTORISED SPORT & RECREATION

1. It is likely that the recommendations made in this intensive, wide ranging and elaborately presented document (over 150 pages) will form the basis of primary legislation concerning Britain's national parks. A National Park Bill, to be prepared at the earliest opportunity according to the report, will be the first major piece of legislative reform relating solely to national parks since the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 which established the basis for our national parks.

2. The purposes of national parks as set out in the 1949 legislation are: "preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the areas"; and "promoting enjoyment by the public". No indication was implied that one purpose should take any priority over the other.

However, the recommendation of the review panel is that the first purpose should be redefined

"to protect, maintain and enhance the scenic beauty, natural systems and land forms, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area".

And the second

"to promote the quiet enjoyment and understanding of the area, insofar as it is not in conflict with the primary purpose of conservation".

This is a fundamental change in emphasis. It establishes the basis of conservation taking absolute precedence over recreation, and confirms the unofficial line which the countryside commission and park authorities have been taking in recent years. Sport and recreation cannot any longer expect to be granted a place in the national park as a right under the second purpose of the original legislation.

3. The report is inconsistent in the way in which it makes judgements concerning the relative intrusion and disturbance caused by visitors and recreationalists in national parks

On the one hand the report estimates that 4 out of 5 visitors view the parks from their cars or by taking a walk of less than three kilometres and so causes congestion in some areas; but asks that this congestion be put into perspective because it is limited in spatial and time extent.

Yet on the other hand it condemns outright the "major effect on the environment and other peoples' enjoyment " caused by motorised sports "of all kinds". No recognition here of the elaborate efforts put in by clubs and organising bodies to manage any impact through time and space, or the stringent restrictions placed on such activity by present laws.

4 The report briefly mentions the problem that active sports (other than walking) have of securing sites. Despite making clear the "intrusion caused by several noisy sports, by motorcycle scrambling, by four wheel-drive vehicles away from highways, by trail bikes, power boats and microlight aircraft" the final view of the review panel is that while they "do not support their total prohibition in national parks, they should only take place on those rare sites where they do not cause undue annoyance to other park users or damage to the fabric of the parks themselves".

5. Page 35 of the review panel report features a picture of two trials bike riders surveying what looks like a sand-dune and carries the caption

"We see national parks as the place for quiet enjoyment- motorsports are an intrusion". Such statements are largely false today. Trials bikes especially are very quiet. A visit to the recent British round of the world trials championship in a beautiful part of Lancashire not far from its industrial heart confirmed how silent trials bikes are. To associate motorcycles and noise in the way that this report does is to fail to give credit to our sport for the work that has been done to reduce noise levels, and at the same time illustrates that public perception may be that noise levels may still be too high.

6. The view is expressed that in most cases there may be more appropriate sites for intrusive sports outside of the parks, and that recreational provision of this kind should be determined on a national scale. Would that it was! It would have been helpful had the report recommended, at least, that for every facility and site that is lost in a national park a new site should be provided elsewhere.

7. Whilst acknowledging that national parks often contain sites and resources that are unique for such sports as climbing, canoeing and caving, there is no recognition that similarly unique sites may be found in the parks for motor sport and recreation.

8. The review document's reference to the "noisy, ugly and damaging" nature of motor sport and recreation is offensive to the many motor recreationalists who exercise their pastime without deserving any of those descriptions. Many of whom have as high a regard for, and often wider understanding of, the countryside than some other groups of users.

9. Quite a short section of the report refers to the public rights of way. In what appears to be traditional Countryside Commission style the opening paragraph promises to be concerned with footpaths, bridleways, BOATS and RUPP's. But then it proceeds to refer only to footpaths and bridleways.

The common mistake is yet again made with the implication that some national parks have jurisdiction over all public rights of way. This isn't true of course as highway authorities retain jurisdiction over BOATS (and possibly RUPP's).

10. The panels' view is that there should be some upgrading of footpaths to bridleways to provide better facilities for horseriders, and that TRO's should be applied to byways in order to reduce intrusion from motor traffic in wilder areas. Not much imagination or fresh thinking here is there? No mention of better liaison or implementation of improved management methods, or how small is the byway network, although there is mention of the Countryside Commission document Managing Rights of Way: An agenda for action.

11. It is recommended that park authorities should have solved all public rights of way problems by 1995. This leaves us wondering how many more of the panels recommendations are as impractical as we know this one to be.

12. On the heading of Planning the panel recommends a further squeezing of the permitted developing rights for temporary use of sites for noisy pursuits, such as clay pigeon shooting, war

games and motorcycle scrambling. Wider use of Article 4 Directives and reduction to 7 days use of sites under permitted development rights is proposed.

13. Under a heading of Architectural Heritage the importance of the built landscape is acknowledged. So is the link between settlement patterns and buildings. However, no mention is made of the historic importance of old roads and the need for them to remain in use and be protected by motorists if they are not to be lost.

14. In the section devoted to traffic and transport the review panel addresses the road and traffic issues related to the inner park areas not associated with long distance or through traffic. The panel believes that the environmental problems created by the motor car are amongst the most serious challenges our society faces. Consequently it emphasizes again the need to place environment ahead of access. No new ideas emerge, but once again thoughts about traffic management initiatives ...including car-free zones are floated. I don't think that motorcyclists should take premature satisfaction from the term car-free (rather than traffic free), since the term "traffic-free" is avoided only to permit public transport buses etc...However, there may be a case for motorcycling organisations to try and have an exclusion for motorcycles which are few and don't congest roads. Trail riders will be aware that closure of valley roads in national parks would invariably also deny access to many byways which link valley heads.

SUMMARY

- a) There is little good news in this report so far as motoring, motorcycling, or motorised sport and recreation is concerned, except that there is a specific recommendation that such activities should not be prohibited from national parks. There is every likelihood that had a corporate approach not been made to the review panel by the motoring organisations (LARA) that total prohibition could have been a recommendation of the panel.
- b) Where motor recreation is permitted in national parks will be severely controlled by tighter legislation.
- c) Misconceptions are perpetuated in what we have come to expect to be traditional manner in reports made on behalf of the Countryside Commission. This is extremely regrettable in such a top level document.
- d) Noise is REGULARLY perceived to be the most objectionable and intrusive aspect of motorised recreation despite great reductions in noise levels in recent years. THIS CANNOT BE IGNORED BY MOTOR RECREATIONALISTS. How people perceive activities is what matters in such circumstances.
- e) There is no recognition in the review document that motor recreation is one of the longest standing recreational activities in the national park. If the proposed National Parks Bill is drafted (as it surely will be), then motor recreation will need to make well prepared moves to safeguard the perpetuating of the tradition.
- f) A recommendation that more serious consideration be given to creating car-free zones in parks (ie: closing small roads to valley heads) is a draconian measure which will seriously affect those four out of five park visitors, who by the review panels' own admission, are content to view the parks from their cars or make a walk of less than three kilometres only. There is no recognition that for some motorists, and almost all enthusiast motorcyclists, their recreation is to ride through lovely scenery on those small roads.
- g) The recommendation that an Association of National Parks Authorities be created to coordinate policies etc. may make our communication with the park 'culture' and 'family' easier.

10/05/91

Geoff Wilson

EXECUTIVE MEETING

11th May 1991

Chairman Dave Giles opened the meeting at 11.09 am. The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted.

Details of the South Downs Way Fighting Fund final account, the British Horse Society ARROW leaflet and copies of the LARA Forward plan were circulated. Copies of the Constitution were distributed.

The post of Vice Chairman will be available to be filled at the AGM in October. Nominations for all executive posts need to be with the Secretary by the end of August. The National Watersports Centre was not available during October. The 1991 AGM would be at the National Motorcycle Museum on 6th October. Two incidents involving people falsely claiming to be TRF members had been reported to the Secretary. "Identifying members on the trail" would be put on the agenda for the next executive meeting.

Details of the Information Pack had been circulated to all Group Reps. Supplies would be available from the Secretary, Ian Thompson. Richard Tallon was negotiating grant aid for publicity material with the Countryside Commission.

Tim Stevens reported success in stopping Powys close four green lanes. He had met with the Sports Council to discuss Outstanding Areas of Special Interest for Sport (OASIS) and green lanes. A Cambridge Group meeting had been well attended, but Somerset Group were concerned that their officers were not paid up TRF members. Are yours? Volunteers were needed urgently to help rights of way in Gloucestershire. In Devon TRO's had been put on the two green lanes at Ermington - an unfair use of the law

The LARA AGM had been stunned to learn that the RAC would be leaving LARA. The Membership Secretary reported an increase in renewals and in total membership compared with this time last year.

Public Relations Officer, Gwyn Thomas reported on the Countryside Research Advisory Group Conference on bicycles held in London. LARA voluntary restraint signs were still being erected without adequate consultation with the TRF. Dave Giles would look into this.

Both the Treasurer and the Editor reported satisfactory situations. More advertising was needed in the magazine.

Chairman Dave Giles announced the publication of the findings of the TRF Green Lane Survey which would be circulated to all highway authorities. Make sure your council has its copy.

The following policy statement was agreed; "All motorcyclists using green roads need to be able to read a map and identify their own routes. The Trail Riders Fellowship sees the funnelling process that all long distance routes encourage as a major cause of erosion and conflict. The TRF does not wish to see the creation of named routes for vehicles, or any further action which creates Long Distance Paths along green lanes. The TRF needs an intimate network of green lanes within each county and throughout the country."

The associate organisation proposal with the Welsh Trail Riders Association (WTRA) was a confirmation of the existing situation. It was agreed that there would be a trial period of co-operation until the AGM.

Brian Wright would take the idea of longer term or life membership forward to the next meeting.

Richard Tallon gave details of the CSMA weekend event in the Forest of Dean and it was agreed to hold the next Executive Meeting in the Forest of Dean on Saturday 14th September to coincide with this. Exact location of the next meeting would be sent to committee members in due course.

The meeting closed at 4.47pm.

Ian Thompson Hon. Sec.

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