

GROUPS

BLACK COUNTRY

Chris Braznell, Tel: 0121 421 3086
1 & 3 Thurs, 9pm, The Mitre, Church Road, Bradmore,
Wolverhampton

BRISTOL

George Pritchard, Tel: 01761 452606
2nd Mon, Warmley Community Centre, Deanery
Road, (A420), Kingswood

CAMBRIDGE

Richard Palmer, Tel: 01353 688344
1st Thur, Golden Ball, Boxworth

CHESHIRE

Nigel Hockin, Tel: 0161 456 8270
2 & 4 Mon, The Robin Hood, Buxton Road, High Lane,
Hazel Grove, Stockport

CORNWALL

Sally A. Madgwick, Tel: 01208 74411
Ring Secretary for details

CUMBRIA

Roger Harris, Tel: 01539 725198
2nd Tuesday, Derby Arms Hotel, Witherslack, Nr. Kendal

DERBYSHIRE & SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Kevin Marsh, Tel: 01246 237910
2 & 4 Tue., Enfield Arms, Broughton Lane, Altercliffe, Sheffield

DEVON

Richard Arscott, Tel: 01803 612950
2nd Tue, The Welcome Stranger, Bickington, Nr. Newton
Abbott

DORSET

Tony Summers, Tel: 01202 894419
1st Tue, Greyhound Inn, Winterbourne, Kingston, (Nr. Bere
Regis)

EAST MIDLANDS

Graham Chinnery, Tel: 01332 863433
2nd Wed, The Chequers Inn, Main St, Breaston, South
Derbyshire, J25 on M1

EAST SCOTLAND

Les Mollison, Tel: 01382 738530
2nd Wed, Glencarse Hotel, A85, Perth to Dundee Rd.

EAST YORKSHIRE

Howard Wadsworth, Tel: 01405 860904
1st Tue, Boot & Shoe, Gowdall, Nr. Stainth

ESSEX

Aelwood Finch, Tel: 01245 329118
2nd Wed, The Swan Public House, Great Eastern,
Nr. Dunmow

GLOUCESTER

Wayne Little, Tel: 01452 611735
1st Tue, Painswick Institute, Painswick, Glos.

HERTFORDSHIRE

Colin Adlam, Tel: 01727 875618
1st Wed, Coach & Horses, Newgate St, Nr Cuffly

ISLE OF WIGHT

Mick Holbrook, Tel: 01983 866361
Last Thur, Liberal Club, Landguard Rd, Shanklin, IOW

KENT

Jeff Hayward, Tel: 01322 863521
2nd Tue, Pied Bull, Farningham, Nr Brands Hatch

LANCASHIRE

Keith Westley, Tel: 01704 893215
1st Tue, Hindshead Pub on A49, Charnock Richard

LINCOLNSHIRE

Alan Wilkinson, Tel: 01529 460793
4th Thur, The Queens Head, Kirkby-la-Thorpe, Sleaford

LODDON VALE

Bernard Green, Tel: 01344 50289
2nd Thurs, Inn in the Park, Woodley Centre, E. Reading

NORTH MIDLANDS

Simon Lowe, Tel: 01298 24388
1st Tue, Stafford Arms, Bagnall & 3rd Tue, Cheshire Cheese,
Buxton

NORTHUMBERLAND

1st Tue, The Beamish Mary, No Place, Co. Durham

NORTH WALES

John Mills, Tel: 01477 534425

1st Wed, Hope & Anchor, Ewloe Place, Buckley

OXFORDSHIRE

Pat McGuire, Tel: 01844 238414
3rd Thursday, Duke of Marlborough, 1.5 miles North of
Woodstock

PEAK DISTRICT GROUP

Phil Sadler, Tel: 01332 344495

1st Thursday, 8pm, Travellers Rest, Ashbourne Road, Derby

RIBBLE VALLEY

Tony Broughton, Tel: 01200 423239
2nd Tue, Pendle Hotel, Chatburn, Clitheroe (off A59)

SHROPSHIRE

Lynton Powell, Tel: 01743 358423
2nd & last Wed, White Horse, Shrewsbury

SOMERSET

Kevin Parfitt, Tel: 01935 72343
Last Thur, The Canal Inn, Wrantage

SOUTHERN

Russ McDermid, Tel: 01703 812371
3rd Wed, The Ship Inn, Oxlesbury, Nr. Winchester

SOUTH LONDON & SURREY

Brian Wright 0181 680 5734 Wed-Sat, 01797 363373 Sun-Tue
9pm every Wed, Ewell Sports & Social Club, Banstead Road,
Ewell, Surrey

SOUTH NORTHANTS

Trevor Gardiner, Tel: 01788 815927

2nd Mon, The Live & Let Live Pub, Harpole, nr. Northampton

SOUTH WALES

Stuart Dodwell, Tel: 01446 710851
1st Thur, Welsh Institute of Sport, Cardiff, 8pm

SUFFOLK

Richard May, Tel: 01787 374073
Last Wed, Manger Pub, A134 Sudbury Rd, Bury-St-Ed.

SWINDON

Pete Owen, Tel: 01793 750557
1st Wed, Jacobs Ladder, Stratton St. Margaret, Swindon

SUSSEX

Bevis Billingham, Tel: 01243 585128
Last Thurs, Ashing on Social Club, Rear of Red Lion, A24,
9 miles North of Worthing

TEESSIDE & NORTH YORKS

Leo Crone, Tel: 01325 380117
1st & 3rd Wed, Blacksmiths Arms, Swainby

THAMES VALLEY

Don Hoaglin, Tel: 01474 813977
3rd Mon, District Arms, Woodthorpe Rd, Ashford, Middlesex

WEST ANGLIA

David Knight, Tel: 01933 313816
1st & 3rd Thurs, Scott Bader Clubhouse, Opp. Parish
Church, Woolston, Wellingborough

WEST MIDLANDS

Richard Hawker, Tel: 01527 893874
1st & 3rd Thurs, Wilmcote Mens Club, Stratford on Avon

WEST SOMERSET

David Dyer, Tel: 01643 841139
2nd Wed, Anchor Inn, Exbridge

WEST YORKSHIRE

Gordon Carr, Tel: 01535 644568
1st & 3rd Thur, Bankfoot Cricket Club, Wickets Close, (off
Cleckheaton Rd), Odsal, Bradford

WILTSHIRE

Bill Riley, Tel/Fax: 01225 863811
1st Tue, The Toll Gate, Holt, Trowbridge

WYVERN

Steve Pighills, Tel: 01902 672479
Every Thur, 10pm, Potter's Rose & Crown,
Colley Lane, Halesowen



Patron: Lord Strathcarron

TRAIL

JANUARY, 1997

No. 221

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

EDITOR: Michael "Nettlebed" Pedley.



Up Above Talybont - Steve Cousins & Martin Murley - Please refer to article on page 10

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All Contributions to the Editor Please keep it short and sweet!

COPY DEADLINE: FIRST POST, 1ST TUESDAY OF MONTH

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Please send to: THE EDITOR *Enclose membership number or a cheque for £5.

The views expressed in 'Trail' are those of its correspondents and not necessarily of the editor or the T.R.F.

EDITOR

For my first editorial of 1996 I expressed a degree of optimism for the coming year and look what happened! I shall therefore confine my comments for 1997 to a simple "Happy New Year to all our readers".

Don't forget your much needed subs are now due and this will be the last exciting copy of TRAIL to drop through your letterbox until you pay up! (and don't forget the Fighting Fund!).

Don't forget the TRF needs you as much as you need the TRF if we are going to enjoy trail riding into the next millennium and beyond. So I will close by wishing you many long and happy runs in 1997 and for those of you who like to do your bit don't forget the next Executive Meeting on February 22nd at the 'Barn', Hockley Heath, Birmingham at 10.30a.m.

NETTLEBED

Happy New Year

FINAL REMINDER ... FINAL REMINDER ... FINAL REMINDER

THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

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EAST MIDLANDS TRF GROUP MEMBER

Please phone for more detail or copy of my Free illustrated price list

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*We welcome old
members and new!*

• CHAIRMAN'S REPORT •

1997 - the start of the TRF's 28th year! Let's hope that this year runs smoothly and that we can get our act back together in an even more solid and determined manner.

Your response to the events of last year showed your allegiance to the Club and your determination not just for us to survive, but to go forward with strength and good spirit.

Down here in darkest Cornwall we have done some entertaining of other Groups as well as travelling to other areas ourselves. Membership of the TRF makes it so easy for individuals, or Groups, to get to trail ride in different areas for a change. Why not consider either inviting another Group to have a weekend with you, or asking another Group if you can go to them.

Incidentally, from our experience, having tried both Youth Hostels and B & B, the most convenient and sociable accommodation is at a pub. They are often really good value (and may even negotiate reduced rates in the Winter months) with the added advantage of not having to drive home if you have had a pint or two!

Having finally admitted defeat with struggling to restart modern four-stroke singles, I have gone off and bought - dare I say it - *a two stroke*. A Honda CRM250R 2. It appears to be a very practical and well thought out bike and light with it. And fully road legal!! After just a couple of days trail riding on it, I thought it had an excellent frame/suspension set up making it very confidence inspiring both on and off tarmac. Grip proved no problem under a variety of conditions, as the very adequate power comes in very smoothly right from tickover. Traction was no doubt greatly assisted by the super-grippy Pirelli MT73's, which present and past experience has proved them to be excellent under nearly all conditions, but because of their soft compound don't last too long, but I am prepared to put up with that as I need all the help I can get to remain vertical!

Photos. Searching through my considerable stock of TRF photos for just two to go on our new brochure, I realised that nearly all of them were of stationary bikes! We desperately need some good action photos of our activities for publicity and promotional purposes. If any of you have any particularly good ones please could you let me see them.

Tony Stuart

TEESIDE & NORTH YORKSHIRE TRF

"PICTURE THIS"

A Photo Quiz Night

Come and test your knowledge of the Green Lanes we love to ride!!

19th February 1997 at 8.30p.m. Blacksmith Arms, Swainby

All Welcome • Prizes • Fund Raiser

National RoW Officer's Report

As I write this I have just completed sorting out the TRF archive of rights of way information; accumulated since the year dot (well, since the mid 1970s). It was a long task hampered by the rediscovery of fascinating snippets such as the formation of the TRF, decades of Ridgeway Public Inquiries and letters to dozens of county councils. As I keep on repeating, I see the job of TRF National RoW Officer as one of co-ordination; certainly if it is only to be a hobby not a full time obsession or occupation. Therefore I have divided up the information into regions and thence to counties/national parks. National records and categories of significance (e.g. the Ridgeway) I have kept. I have made a catalogue, summarised below. At the next executive I will be asking local representatives to collect information relevant to their areas and sign for it so I know where it has gone... OK, the real reason is that my filing cabinet is full!

Automobile Association, Avon, British Horse Society, Byways, Byways and Bridleways Trust, CCPR, Cheshire, Cornwall, Country Landowners Association, Countryside Access, Countryside Commission, Countryside Committee (H of L) 1987 on, Countryside Committee (H of L) pre 1981, Countryside Committee (H of L) 1981 to 1983, Countryside Committee (H of L) 1984 to 1986, Cumbria, Cycling and CTC, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, Durham, Dyfed, Gloucestershire, Hants, Herts, Lancashire, LARA, LARA & BMF, Legal details, precedents, etc., National Farmers Union, Ordnance Survey, Pennine Bridleway, Press cuttings 1, Press cuttings 2, Public Inquiries

and PI, Ramblers Association, Ridgeway 1975 - 1979, Ridgeway 1980, Ridgeway 1981, Ridgeway 1982, Ridgeway 1983, Ridgeway 1984, Ridgeway 1985, Ridgeway 1986 - 1992, Road Research, RuPPs, Scotland, Seminars and RoW conferences, Shropshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Surrey, Survey of RoW (TRF) 1987, Sussex, TRF Information Sheets, TRF Miscellaneous 1, TRF Miscellaneous 2, Yorkshire.

Sprockets & Chains

Rental steel front and alloy rear sprockets - J.T and Chiravalli steel sprockets - DID, RK and Regina chains (standard, heavy duty and O ring) - special rear sprocket manufacturing - 520 conversions.

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POWYS

Charlie Morris and Chris Marsden (AWD) are making representations regarding a TRO on a BOAT in the Marches area near Moelfre City. Surface erosion caused by lack of maintenance is a so called reason. As usual damage is by mainly agricultural vehicles who will not be stopped! Complain to: RoW Section, Powys CC, County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, Powys.

LAKE DISTRICT HIERARCHY OF TRAIL ROUTES INITIATIVE

WINTER 1996/97 UPDATE

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

No more Trail Maintenance Days have been arranged yet. The plan is to fix six days during 1997 (three in the south and three in the north of the area) so that all of us could get them in our diaries. Unfortunately Jenni Gorman, who took on the responsibility for coordinating the maintenance days has had her life turned rather upside down by the closure of the Lakeland Village 4 x 4 operation. Hopefully by the time the Group next meets in mid March we will be in a position to fix 1997 dates.

COMMERCIAL OPERATORS

The most respectable and cooperative of commercial operators in the Lakes, the Lakeland Village 4 x 4 operation, run by Jenni Gorman, has closed down. The circumstances of the closure are interesting. Although the business was a financial success, it was judged that when measured against the general adverse publicity which 4 x 4 vehicle use in the Lake District attracted, the operation was not compatible with other Lakeland Village operations.

Lakeland Safari (Richard Geddes) continues to operate with little or no contact with either the National Park Authority, LARA or the Hierarchy initiative. The same applies to Moorland Adventures (Dave Young) from Yorkshire. Both these commercial operations continue to attract bad publicity, and although feigning to operate within the spirit of the work of the Hierarchy initiative in reality do not.

It is a sad reflection on the scene that the commercial operators who we cannot reach continue to operate whilst the one with which we had very good contact and cooperation is no longer operating

BETHECAR MOOR

Pretty soon we will already be six months into the TRO on Bethacar Moor (from 19 July 1996), and there is a lot of work to be done there. Research is still being done into the best route restoration methods to be trialed, which will satisfy all parties concerned, not least the ecologists who find some special attraction in the wildlife which has inhabited the flooded stretches of the Bethacar routes.

The level of use of the moor remains minimal, however universal enforcement of the TRO is proving to be difficult. Metal TRO signs have been regularly removed, sometimes within the space of just a few days after fixing. One time, it is claimed that motorcyclists were observed removing the signs at Nibthwaite, but no details were obtained to substantiate this. We cannot assume

that the sign removal in each case has been done by disgruntled vehicle users. The issue is complex ... aren't they all? Some countryside users object to signs and notices as unnecessary intrusions, whilst others view them as a means to solving problems in ways they don't wish the problems to be solved. The removal of notices and sign posts is a general and quite widespread problem which is central to countryside management policy.

WALNA SCAR ROAD

The period of voluntary restraint is now ended (31st December). We should receive a report from the National Park Authority in March.

PRESS REPORTS

The Westmorland Gazette continues to be unhelpful in its reporting of trail use issues.

SECOND STAGE SURVEYS

Between January and March 1997 it is hoped that all the outstanding surveys of trail-routes will be completed in the Lake District Park, mainly in the north and west. Once these have been done the final stage of the first attempt at creating a hierarchy of trail-routes for the whole of the Park can be completed.

SPORTS COUNCIL GRANT AID FOR LARA

The ongoing involvement of LARA in the Hierarchy of Trail Routes initiative was one of the programmes which featured strongly in LARA's second application for grant aid to the Sports Council in 1996. The result is that the SC will be grant aiding the work of LARA for a further four year period into the year 2000.

OTHER ISSUES

The HoTR initiative is attracting continually wider interest, and generating more enquiries. A most positive aspect is that we are now able to answer the enquiries more positively than we ever could previously.

Peak District National Park

The Peak District National Park is moving towards adopting the same principles, and is anxiously awaiting the publication of the report on the Lake District work.

Martindale

The owner of a holiday property in Martindale, who lives in Oxford, was anxious to know if the track leading to his property was to feature in the hierarchy of trail routes. Cumbria County Council passed his enquiry on to LARA. We were able to show him the principles of the HoTR work, and could reassure him that the use of the track is not likely to change.

Clubs Handling Enquiries

The National Park Authority is receiving an increased number of enquiries regarding the legitimate places to use vehicles on trails in the Park. This is not necessarily a sign of an increase in interest or in use, but is certainly an indication that potential users are at least trying to research the lawful places to ride and drive. Most of these enquiries are passed on to the clubs in the area to respond to in line with the hierarchy so far established.

AND OUTSIDE OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Vauxhall Off Road Club in the Pennines

Another enquiry to CCC, following the sighting of a group of Vauxhall Frontera's in the Pennines to the north of the Eden valley was also passed to LARA for attention and reply. We were able to confirm that the group was from the Vauxhall Off-Road Club, and that they were indeed on a section of trail which has only uncertain rights.

Vauxhall Club in The Lakes

This gave us the opportunity to send codes and Access Guides to the Vauxhall Off-Road Club, and to learn that the club was arranging a weekend in the Lake District. The club sent details to the National Park Authority for information. Later we learned that during the weekend a vehicle had to be abandoned overnight on Breast High, to be recovered the following day.

Old Mill Lane Beetham

At Beetham, south of Kendal (between Milnthorpe and Carnforth) a dispute concerning the blocking of a right of way has been ongoing for over 30 years. Cooks Paper Makers extended their factory over an old lane (with confirmed vehicular rights) which had crossed a now totally unidentifiable ford. It had been the road to a very old corn mill and which in the early 1800's had been severed by the building of a new turnpike across the Hale mosses which we now know as the A6. Cumbria County Council failed to resolve the issue which would have entailed requiring the factory to demolish a large building. Cooks have now agreed to the creation of a quite attractive alternative route around the factory, including the building of a major bridge across the river Beela... for horses and pedestrians. The principles of the Hierarchy of Trail Routes have been applied here, and after full consultation, it is accepted that there is no practical purpose in pursuing vehicular use of this route which had been superseded by other roads in close proximity. However, the unwillingness of vehicular users to easily relinquish rights over the past 30 years is what has led to maintenance of rights for other classes of user. Had vehicular users not stood against earlier proposals to stop-up the route then the present satisfactory outcome would not have been achieved.

Geoff Wilson, Cumbria

ENTRY FORM FOR

Coast-to-Coast '97

This event will run from Scarborough to Hawes and from Hawes to Morecambe on the weekend of 10th and 11th of May 1997. All riders will receive a T-shirt and run leaders will receive a free sweatshirt. Anyone else requiring a sweatshirt can buy one for £12.

- Places will be limited and will be on a first come first served basis.
- Any profit made goes to the TRF Fighting Fund.
- Don't forget you must be a paid up member of the TRF and your bike should be road legal.

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE PHONE NUMBER

MACHINE TRF MEMBERSHIP NO.

T-shirt size Large (40-42) XL (42-44) XXL (44-48)

I am willing to lead Day One Day Two

I am willing to back up Day One Day Two

Please indicate type of riding preferred, e.g. scenic/difficult/with lunch stop/
without lunch stop

It is best to be honest as your weekend might not be as enjoyable if you have to push yourself too hard.

Accommodation information required? If so please tick the box.

Scarborough Hawes

Entry Fee 18.00

Sweatshirt 12.00

(if required) _____

Please send this entry form along with your cheque and a self addressed, stamped envelope to **Phil Fawcett, 15 Taunton Vale, Guisborough, Cleveland, TS14 7NB.**

BRISTOL GROUP'S BRECON WEEKEND

please refer to
front cover
picture

Riders:

Myself, Tony 'The strongest right leg in Avon' Steel on my DR350

Leigh 'Valentino' Holvey on his trustworthy steed (Ho Ho!) XR200

Steve 'Bad Back' Cousins on his XR250

Martin 'Superhero or Silly?' Murley riding the monster XR600

Ian 'Oh I forgot it was a trail riding weekend' Terry riding a Suzuki 1200 Bandit!

Me, Steve and Leigh loaded the bikes on the Friday night and left for the cosy Beacons Guest house in Brecon. Fortunately we arrived in time to partake in a couple of pints of local brew before beddy byes.

The following morning at breakfast we met the Northants group also down for the weekend. Martin joined us as we kitted up, arriving on his 600 having ridden from Bristol and fallen off on the way!

After a 3 nano second warm up for him, the 4 of us set off for the day.

The first lane out of Brecon (LR160 038282 051269) was a nice stony climb through a tree lined lane causing no problems. Onwards to the famous Gap road (040247 035173). Now despite riding and walking the Gap on quite a few occasions this road still sends a tingle down my spine when climbing slowly up the Right hand side of the valley. The combination of the breathtaking views if the weather is reasonable, and being on my bike is a great feeling. The weather was a bit misty at the start but cleared to Sun the higher we went....Super! At the top Leigh had a bit of bother up the stony bit but all was well as we stopped and took in the atmosphere with no-one else around. The drop down towards the gully was easy except for the odd snow patch making things a little more interesting. The gully, oh yes the gully. Muggins was first, so as usual drop down slowly one side to about 10 feet from the stream and then gas it through the stream and up the steep bank and hope you make it. I was about halfway up the left channel when the front wheel went walkabout and I ended up with the bike sideways with me somehow managing to jump off and hold it. To quote one of the more famous Spike Milligan sayings 'What am I going to do now' crossed my mind. Help was forthcoming (as soon as they had put their cameras away!) and we managed to haul it to the top. A similar fate awaited both Steve and Leigh but Martin showed the way on the monster.

Next was the climb over and drop to Talybont reservoir (LR160 054145 090162 LR161 090162 103206). You first ride up a tree lined lane by the Outdoor Activity Centre and head upwards. When I got to the gate I met three 4WD vehicles. They told me they had slept there overnight and were wondering what the road was like over the top as there was a lot of snow about. A few riders came past from the opposite direction heading off toward the Gap no doubt. By this time

I was wondering where the others from my lot had got to? I rode back to find Leigh's chain off. Apparently it was at the end of adjustment and had skipped off. This is the same Leigh who has written in his Pontypool report recently about good maintenance!!! And to rub salt in the wound he had a spare bike in good nick at home in the garage! We got it back on and headed off and overtook the 4WD's. We had to keep out of the ruts as there were some large snow drifts. We stopped for a break and the 4WD's came along with the first one ploughing straight into a big snow drift and not getting out.....shame. I chucked a snowball at Martin expecting to hit the back of his helmet but he turned at the last minute and caught it right in his eye. Whoops that hurt. I made my humble apologies half expecting him to belt me but I got off lightly! This is probably because he thinks I'm a frail old 40 year old and I know his brother Andy asks after the 'old bloke with the beard'. Chip on my shoulder? Too bloody right, I'm only 31 yer buggers!

We dropped down to Talybont along the rocky lane. Near the bottom, Leigh was in trouble again with his bike. We dropped the back wheel out and found the bearings broken up along with wrecked chain and sprockets with teeth missing. Steve bodged it as best he could and we decided to get Leigh back to Brecon. I thought we could take a look at an old ford across the Usk on the way back (091254 092259). The RUPP up to the river was a boring farm track but the ford was closed and had a fence across its bank. Upon looking closer, the bank on our side had been broken up so it was just a steep drop into the water. The other side of the river had a normal slope into the river (with foundations).

The water looked far too deep to cross but it would be interesting to find out who closed the ford from a legal standpoint. From here we backtracked down the lane and limped back to Brecon as the XR's back wheel wanted to go walkees.

All this action slowed us somewhat, so the 3 of us left, grabbed a bite and headed for Grwyne Fawr (LR161 188333 252286).

When we arrived at the bottom, the Sun was trying to break through the light mist. We set off and very soon realised the wet surface was going to give us a bit of grief. The first part is fairly flat and covered in ruts (No 4WD signs before this!). No problems there. Then the lane heads up a grassy bank to the main rocky track. We were having a bit of trouble on the grass and then headed up the track where there was a large snow drift. Martin and I managed to slip and slide around the bank and get past but Steve had a fall and his bad back was giving him a lot of pain (that will teach him not to try the Karma Sutra!) so he decided to wait at the bottom whilst me and Martin pushed on. We clambered around the corner and up the big step without too much bother and headed upwards. The track is very rocky and quite steep in places, and with snow drifts every 50 yards the lane got more and more interesting. If you have never ridden up here, as you ride up there is a long near vertical descent on your left hand side if you get it badly wrong! As we were nearing the top the cloud rolled in, giving us visibility of about 10 yards...great. To cap it all my trusty DR stalled and as per DR350 tradition I could not get the damn

thing started.

We decided to retreat and luckily I managed to bump the DR in the downward direction and we met Steve relaxing near the bottom. As the weather closed in (mist) we headed towards a few more lanes. The first was quite interesting (185312 187301). It is fairly straightforward until you turn left at the gate with the old fort Castle Dinas in front of you. Then the lane starts to drop into a very muddy lane with some large gulleys cut out by water channelling down it. The three of us enjoyed slithering to the bottom of that one. We then bear right and took the next right on the tarmac road. Drop down past the farmyard on the left and take the next left (182291 185272). This lane is a lovely narrow lane through trees which cuts through small fords every 100yds or so.

Time was moving on so the three of us quickly moved on to last lanes of the day (168265 158298). This is a very little used lane as a local farmer seemed a little shocked to see us but was quite happy to point us in the right direction. The lane runs between two hillsides and is easy to ride and very scenic. I think we possibly went along the wrong fork as we ended fighting our way through tree branches before eventually meeting a Y fork thinking maybe we should have been on the other one! We then came out on a short stretch of tarmac before entering the lane again. At the end of this lane we came upon a locked gate so we backtracked and went out of the field through a normal farm gate.

By this time it was drizzling and it was tea time so we headed back to the Guest House to find Ian had turned up on his new Suzuki 1200 Bandit (roadburner)! We suggested this might not be the ideal trail bike for Sunday's ride but we did agree that shoehorning the engine into my DR might help me get up the Gully on the Gap! (Nay Nay! I hear you cry!)

Saturday night was spent down the local where stories of heroic deeds of motorcycling bravado were mixed with tales of Leigh's astounding sexual exploits (ask him yourself). Of course, as more alcohol was consumed the tales got bigger and better (as they do), and a fine time was had by all.

Sunday started a little grey but dry and the three of us set off (Myself, Steve and Martin). We headed out of Brecon on the A470 towards the Brecon Mountain centre where we joined Sarn Helen. The beauty of Sarn Helen is not just the stunning scenery but the fact that you can ride for a couple of hours without looking at a map (much) because it's fairly straightforward to follow.

The first stretch (LR160 977262 925185) is a nice grassy mile or so across an open area where I enjoyed hopping over the small lumps. We then joined a recently surfaced gravel track where our pace increased a little. The track then turns rocky and the scenery becomes quite dramatic as we passed along the edge of the steep mountain, Rhos Dringarth. We saw the same 4WD boys as the day before camped in an area just off the track. Sarn Helen then becomes quite barren and intimidating as we cross the top of Bryn Melyn. The tarmac road was joined again until we bear right into the woods (925167 879117). We passed a few people

with shotguns hoping that they would not challenge us of our right to be there as they might have a slight advantage over us! But a few miserable faces greeted us instead.

As we got to the fire tower the lane became wide and straight and with lots of puddles and became a bit of a water adventure playground as we splashed through them getting very wet in the process. When we got to the tarmac again we crossed the Head of the Valleys road and went up Mong Street (ask Martin) to join the final stretch (856093 822050). As you enter the edge of the open cast mines there are lots of gravel forest roads and it is easy to get lost but we just headed upwards and aimed for the edge of the woods. We eventually came to the lane 'properly' again where there was a No Vehicle sign up. I'm not sorry if I offend you but we carried on as this is Sarn Helen, an ancient road that carries vehicular rights for many miles and then suddenly stops! I think not. Just because we crossed a county border does not extinguish that right (Similar principles applies to the Gap!). We carried on for a few miles enjoying the great views before we decided to turn around and head back along the same route towards Brecon. Don't be put off by riding lanes in reverse, everything appears very differently. As we got back to Brecon it was only about three o'clock so we headed back up the Gap again. The difference to the gully over a day was quite stark. Visible signs of 4WD damage and drizzle made the going pretty tough and we all failed to clean it to the top.

Wearily we headed back to Brecon, loaded up and went to Pizza Hut for another load up before getting home and going to bed...night night!


Tony Steel

Come Ride with us in

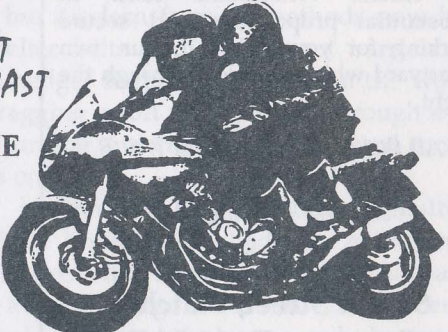
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FORUM FOR MOTORISED SPORTS IN WALES

Fforwm Ar Gyfer Chwaraeon Modurol Yng Nghymru

The Forum is a fraternity of representatives of many motorsport organisations and off-tarmac vehicle user groups. It is supported by the Sports Council for Wales and is backed by the Cambrian Council of Welsh Motor Cycle Clubs. It is not a governing body and has no powers but, as an Associate Member of MOLARA, it is able to promote the good work of that body and to act as its sounding board in Wales. The Forum's stated aims recognise the need for the activities of its members to be sustainable within the Welsh countryside and to that end it encourages compliance with codes for responsible behaviour by organisers, competitors and all off-road vehicle users.

The Forum is also concerned to promote the need for maintaining and adding to permanent and transitory motor sport venues in Wales. For this and other purposes it arranges an interchange of information and co-operation between members and other organisations including environmental agencies and local authorities.

Meetings are normally held on Thursday evenings in the Welsh Institute of Sport at about two monthly intervals. There will be a welcome for anyone who would like to join in, whether on a regular or occasional basis, or who simply wants to know more about its objectives and workings. Just tell John Cadogan of your interest and he will add your name to the circulation list. Further details from: Bill Kershaw 01633 895241, or John Cadogan 01633 853843.

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The Fall & Rise of The British Hedgerow

The naturalist Richard Jefferies said in 1884, "Without hedges, England would not be England". There is no more powerful symbol of rural England than its hedgerows, Wordsworth called hedges "little lines of sportive wood run wild". The English hedgerow is found in few other parts of the world (among them Normandy, Ireland, New England and Tasmania). Hooper's Rule states that the age of a hedge can be deduced by multiplying the number of tree species per 30 yards by 100. Records attest that a four species hedge will indeed be 400 years old, an eight species hedge, 800 years and so on.

An awful lot of our country has been stolen from us over the past few decades. Between 1947 and 1985, 109,000 miles of hedgerow were grubbed out. A fifth of the remaining hedgerows in England and a quarter of those in Wales have been lost over the past six or seven years. Since 1940 these distinctive features of the landscape have been disappearing at a phenomenal rate. Of the 500,000 miles thought to exist at the end of the second world war barely half remain.

Until the 1970s the government subsidised farmers to rip out hedges in the name of agricultural improvement. Now agricultural production is being cut back as subsidies are withdrawn, but are our hedgerows going to benefit? With the advent of EC butter and grain mountains farmers are being paid to plant new hedges and care for those that remain. A survey by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, in October 1991, estimated that total hedgerow length fell from 341,000 miles in 1984 to 266,000 miles in 1990, accounting in six years for a third of the entire post-war loss. In Huntingdonshire, ten miles of Victorian hedgerow per square mile was down to three miles in 1965. This is a devastating rate of loss. If historic buildings were going at this rate, there would be a national outcry. Yet hedges are the historic buildings of natural history and unlike any other aspect of the landscape.

Hedgerows lie at the heart of the conflict between farming and conservation. Agriculture created hedges and many date from the enclosures of the old open field parishes between 1700 and 1820; but modern farming methods now have little use for them. Their value as shelter belts and stock-proof barriers has declined. To the modern cereal farmer, hedges harbour pests, get in the way of machines and occupy land. A tractor dragging a 10ft wide plough through a five acre field spends about 60% of its time turning and cultivating awkward corners and headlands. In a 100 acre field this is only 20%.

Before the war, farmers saw hedgerows as valuable agricultural infrastructure, providing stock proof field boundaries, shade for cattle and a windbreak for crops. Post-war methods have made hedgerows a mere nuisance. The modern farmer wants large fields in which large machines can manoeuvre easily. To control grazing animals he prefers fences which can easily be moved. Hedgerows, therefore, are grubbed up relentlessly. If farmers are to "set aside" 15% of their land, they are likely to try even harder to maximise production on the

remaining 85%. Where land goes out of farming altogether, new commercial developers may be as reluctant as farmers to retain hedgerows. The golf boom is claiming much redundant farmland, but landscape engineering takes precedence over preserving inherited features.

Farmers used to keep hedgerows in shape by periodically trimming them, coppicing them (cutting them back so they can regenerate) or laying them (slicing part-way through the main stems of the young trees and knitting them together). A new scheme, administered by the Countryside Commission, provides grants to farmers who agree to ten year programmes of hedgerow restoration and management. The incentive scheme is all very well, but if we are really to rely on bribing landowners to preserve our heritage, then £3.5 million does not go far. Many rural councils are dominated by the very landowners whose freedom of action would be severely curtailed by the energetic use of the Hedgerow Regulations. Even where orders are made, landowners may circumvent them by allowing protected hedgerows to disintegrate through neglect.

In Kent we have a byway near Chatham (KH41) which had been systematically ploughed until we complained about it a few years ago. KCC archives have RAF photographs dating from 1947 showing that this lane was once hedged. Being a byway it is no longer ploughed, but has zero character. NS285 (Happy Valley, Meopham), KH185, parts of KH152 and 220 (Pilgrims Way, Hollingbourne), ER25 (South Alkham, Dover), CB202 (Aylesham), ER60 (Dover), a downgraded byway now part bridleway HE116 (Selsted, near Dover) all have been ploughed and may once have been hedged and that's just Kent.

As mentioned last month the Hedgerow Regulations (if enabled) may halt the tide of destruction. There is a chance for the TRF to gain some positive publicity in supporting the protection of hedges alongside green lanes. Perhaps in the future we could start re-hedging our lanes? I for one would rather ride a twisting and hedged byway, than struggle across a ploughed and rutted prairie created in the name of an EC grain mountain. *Steve Neville, National RoW Officer*

TRAIL RIDERS FELLOWSHIP
1997 NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEETINGS
will be held at
THE BARN, HOCKLEY HEATH, SOLIHULL
on the following dates:
February 22nd, May 17th, September 6th
THE AGM WILL BE HELD ON OCTOBER 18TH
National Motor Cycle Museum (to be confirmed)
10.30a.m.

THE 5TH EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL MEETING

will be held at
Rutland Sailing Club, Edith Weston village, near North Luffenham
on Saturday 15th March 1997

in the Commodore's Room.
Coffee from 10.30a.m. Meeting starts at 11.00a.m.
Inexpensive lunches available in the cafeteria - Ruddles Ales.

As a direct follow-up from the last meeting, when Sam Watt presented the Northern Region Lane Numbering and Recording System, the next meeting will focus upon the nomination and co-ordination of the MAP CONTROLLERS who are the key people to ensure continuity of TRF record keeping for the future. **All Groups in the East Midlands/Eastern Counties are therefore requested to attend the MAP CONTROLLERS MEETING on 15th March, so that progress can be made on this important task.**

If your group is unable to attend, but you are able to advise the name, address/phone number and TRF Membership Number of your Map Controllers, please let me know before the meeting.

Jeff Ward, (E.M. Regional Meetings Secretary), Tel: 01536 267036 (Day)

SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL MEETING

The next meeting of this region will be
on Saturday 8th March 1997
at The Black Swan, Ockham, Surrey
Meeting starts at 10.30a.m.

Exit the M25 at junction 10 and take the south bound carriageway of the A3 signposted Guildford. Keep to the left hand side of the slip road on to the A3 and turn first left, just before Wisley Lake, into Old Lane. Follow this until you come to crossroads and the Black Swan is on the left at this junction. Ref: 089573 Martyr's Green. OS187 Dorking.

All are welcome to attend this meeting, especially those who have attended previously from the Southern and Lodden Vale Groups.

Please note that this is a **new venue** for our meeting and as we have been promised the exclusive use of a small room usually used as the restaurant, a good turn out would be appreciated.

Items for inclusion in the Agenda to me by the 5th March please -
Brian Read, Tel: 0181 660 9620.

LETTERS

NEVADA MOTORCYCLE ADVENTURE

Born again biker turned 50 dreams of off road adventures. Being relatively new to trail riding with only 4 years under his belt keeps on dreaming. Friend and fellow trail bike rider Gary goes to Las Vegas for his holidays. On his return he is so hyped up about his holiday the wife and I begin to think perhaps we should consider a holiday in Vegas. I then read an article in August issue of Trail Bike magazine about an enterprising "gentleman" in Reno Nevada who operates 6 day trail riding holidays in the deserts and mountains of Nevada. A plan begins to form, perhaps I can enjoy trail riding in Nevada while the wife and daughter try their luck in the Vegas casinos (risky, no not really).

On the 18th of October I flew out to Los Angeles and over the next 4 days made my way North by hire car through central California to Reno, Nevada taking in the national parks of Yosemite and Sequoia en route. It is my first trip to the USA and I am awestruck by the sheer size of this vast country. 1200 miles later I am in Reno where I meet up with my host and guide for the next 6 days Matt Ernst born in New York moved West 20 years ago. Later that same night while having a beer in a local blues club Matt tells me that the other 3 riders booked on the ride had

unfortunately not been able to make the ride so it was going to be Matt and I out in the deserts and mountains of Nevada. Bright and early with the sun just coming up Matt pulls up outside my hotel in his huge Chevy 4x4 station wagon looking like a Paris-Dakar support vehicle towing a 6 bike trailer loaded with 3 x DR350 electric start trail bikes. I climb in and we are on our way. "We are going to head South" says Matt, it was only 18 degrees last night (14 degrees below freezing) looks like the weather is turning (why did I bring my factor 15 sun screen?). We drive for the next three hours with Matt talking about how he operates his trail rides, the safety equipment, the medical equipment, insurance cover etc. He points out various features as we pass through the mountains and plains. I soon begin to realise just how sparsely populated Nevada is. In three hours we pass through one small settlement, mile after mile of mountains and desert scrub. Matt explains there are over 330 mountain ranges in Nevada and we shall be riding at altitudes up to 12000ft. We eventually park up and unload the bikes. "We will spend the rest of the day letting you get used to the bike" explains Matt. Over the next five hours we ride up steep rocky tracks, soft sand tracks, (I find the sand a bit tricky and the electric start DR350 a bit heavy) and some steep sandy descents. That night we spend the night in a classy Motel complete with casino. Over the next five days we rode all sorts of trails, long wide fast trails with the dust clouds streaming out behind us, steep rocky trails strewn with cabbage sized rocks, dry river beds full of soft sand, through narrow steep sided canyons, along high ridges, and up to the

top of mountains with names like Pilot Peak 9184ft. Moho Mountain 8805ft. McKinney Tanks summit 6391ft. Over the last two days it snows as well and low cloud covers some of the mountains preventing us from reaching the top of Bunker Hill 11474ft, and limiting us to the lower ground and snow covered trails. It's so cold that we have icicles hanging from the front mudguards of the DR350s. Apart from the brilliant riding there was another side to this adventure we saw numerous abandoned gold and silver mines littered with relics from those pioneering years including an early 1900s Ford truck, an old stationary steam engine, but no gold nuggets. I met some great characters out there, with names like Humpy ex G.I. who was based in Southampton, Corky expert

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female pool player, and Cat 22 years in the marines 2 years in Vietnam and many more. We swilled loads of beer in bars looking like the bars you see in the wild west films, and everybody seemed to wear cowboy hats. To sum up, brilliant riding, superb scenery, good food and beer and lovely people. Matt seemed to have limitless knowledge of all the areas we visited, we rode about 500 miles and we drove about 500 miles. "On a group ride we would have ridden a continuous route" explained Matt "meeting up with the support vehicle at the end of each day". Matt was talking about organising a trail ride from Nevada to Alaska next year, well you never know, but I hope to go back next year. Oh nearly forgot, Las Vegas was really great too, the wife loved it, even made some money on the slots. My host and guide Matt Ernst of Nevada Motorcycle Adventures can be contacted on 702-359-4380. Anyone wanting to know more from me can contact me on 01302-840693 between 7.30 - 10.00pm.

Peter Cross, East Yks. Group.

BAD TASTE?

With reference to Mr. Mark Gregory's letter in the December 1996 edition of TRAIL magazine.

He refers to "Tents pitched we all drift off to sleep serenaded by a group of Brownies singing camp side songs (now where did I leave that shot gun!) only to be rudely awoken the next morning by the local cockerel (got any cartridges left for that shot gun you found!!)"

Are these comments not in exceedingly bad taste after recent events in Dunblane and with Mr. Tim Ley, especially as in the same issue the Chairman of the TRF says "I must point out to you that whilst TRAIL is our "in-house" bulletin, it does circulate to persons other than club members.

If this is the case should the Editor not use a bit of common sense and EDIT certain letters?

Whilst we all understand that the comments should be taken light heartedly maybe this wasn't the time nor the place.

Dave Kirkby, Steve Whitley, Neil Williams, North Wales TRF Group

ON THE SUBJECT OF CONFLICT

Whilst on the subject of conflict I was impressed by the following tale. The Witley Motorcycle Club have resurrected an old long distance trial known as the Witley 200. This is a motorcycle event that recently attracted 150 riders who rode 100 miles a day over a two day period. The second day saw the event using some of East Hampshire's byways at the same time as a British Horse Society event. It transpired that the equestrian organisers felt compelled to write to the organisers, the Witley 200 - to thank them for the courtesy shown by their riders to the equestrians. Odd that I didn't read about that one in the Telegraph!

Dave Tilbury, Hampshire

MONMOUTHSHIRE (GWENT) TRAIL RIDE

The aim of this trail ride was to explore the lanes around the lower Usk Valley. Vic Lodge came along for at least the second time (so I must be pleasing somebody!). Another 'second timer' was Bill Richards and 'first timers' were Ross McFarlane and our former Rights of Way Officer Martin Hurst. The last three were all DR350 mounted... and they all started fairly well - Martin's with a little button on the handlebar!

We started from my father's farm and rode on some easy lanes to start. Then we went down the 'widowmaker' at Craig-y-Master - no longer difficult due to the landowner 'playing' with his excavator in this lane. I was surprised to find the next lane 'maintained'! Someone had trimmed out the saplings. A later lane from Lower Argoed was blocked with a small ivy covered tree. We didn't have Charlie, so we cleared a way around the end. I then led the way through head high weeds and the occasional bramble - I was the one with the cheapest (£20) coat!

Further on we came to a very large fallen ash tree - where is Charlie? I found a way around through a hollow next to the lane. Bill tested the new route, taking many attempts and even showing us where we could fall off.

We stopped for a pop in Llanvair Discoed and Martin explained the principles of cleats on bicycle pedals.

The muddiest lane of the day was the RUPP and un-tarred public road in

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Wentwood Forest. It was obvious that most 'damage' was forestry related.

We stopped for fuel and to service Bill's clutch. It slipped on the slightest hill... thoughts of 'breaking up or abandoning the ride'. It turned out to be a stiff cable, so after much lubrication and to-ing and fro-ing it was freed.

In a later lane there were three sheep's skeletons, but they had no watches.

We travelled on through almost continuous lanes, one in the bed of a stream and onto Little Mill.

We rode over the edge of the map onto 161 and over the mountain to Cwmavon. It was a clear day and we could see for miles. The heather was a nice shade of pale purple. We rode down a 'widowmaker', everyone commenting that it was challenging enough downhill.

After picking up refreshments we had a picnic on the mountain above Cwm Du.

We then returned via three more lanes, arriving back at about half past six. This was later than Martin and Ross had requested, but I was into stoppage time. Anyway, if they were coming that far 'best make a day of it'. We rode on 43 lanes and everyone said they enjoyed themselves.

Mark F. Holland, Gloucester Group

LEGALITY OF ACTIVITIES OF 'RIDERS IN THE SKYE'

Martin Chandler of Gloucester takes umbrage on being questioned over the legality of the activities of 'Riders in the Skye'.

Significantly his response makes no mention of public rights of way but hints at permission - hardly 'Legal Motorcycles on Legal Carriageways'.

Interestingly Geoff Crossland in his letter asks members not to contribute 'own goal' articles.

In my view 'Riders in the Skye' is the most damaging article I have read in TRAIL.

The negative images of environmental damage and the cavalier attitude of the group show the TRF in a very poor light.

We all should be aware that at this very moment, after consultation with a wide range of interest groups, civil servants at the DoE and DTp are deciding whether the irresponsible

activities of a minority of vehicle users on byways justifies legislation to prohibit vehicular use of byways.

Trail riders would perhaps have nothing to fear were it not for the sort of activities described in 'Riders in the Skye'.

On a more positive note I was pleased to read Paul Atherton's letter regarding mopeds on bridleways. I have felt for many years that the motorcycle is the modern alternative to that archaic form of transport, the horse, and that if trail riding was for necessity rather than recreation, bridleways would already be open to us.

Who knows, when the almost silent motorcycle arrives, as it inevitably will, we may yet see bridleways opened to motorcycles.

John Thorp, Widnes

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