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# TRAIL

The Bulletin of the TRF, the National Club for  
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Legal Carriageways. EDITOR: Fred Ellison.

JANUARY 2004 No. 305



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Ron Pranglen crossing the River Pang in West Berkshire.

*Photo by David Cook*

## TRF OFFICERS

- CHAIRMAN** ..... Geoff Wilson, 4 Scaur Close, Lazonby, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 1BT.  
Tel: 01768 898584.
- VICE CHAIRMAN** ..... Tim Stevens, 99 Cheshire Street, Market Drayton, Shropshire, TF9 1AE.  
Tel: 01630 657627, E-mail: timLARA@aol.com
- MEMBERSHIP SEC.** ..... Mary Stevens, P.O. Box 343, Market Drayton, Shropshire, TF9 1WT.  
Tel: 01630 657627, E-mail: memsectrf@aol.com
- SECRETARY** ..... Ted Lowres, 53 Stokefields, Guildford, GU1 4LT.  
Tel: 01483 535644, E-Mail: ejlowres@ntlworld.com
- TREASURER** ..... John Gardner, 119 Hallbridge Gardens, Up Holland, Lancs., WN8 0EP.  
Tel: 01695 622792, E-mail: john@gardner119.freeserve.co.uk
- PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER** ..... Andrew Prince, Stour Lodge, Campden Lawns, Alderminster, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 8PA. Tel/Fax: 01789 450366,  
E-mail: pr@trf.org.uk
- EDITOR** ..... Fred Ellison, Sheepcote Farm, Moor Lane, Wiswell, Clitheroe, Lancs., BB7 9DG.  
Tel: 01254 823893, Fax: 01254 887999, E-mail: editor@trf.org.uk
- BMF LIAISON OFFICER** ..... David Giles, 22 Ford Lane, Allestree, Derby, DE22 2EW.  
Tel/Fax: 01332 552288, E-mail: davegiles@dlgtraining.freeserve.co.uk
- LARA REP.** ..... Richard Fordham, 35 Kelvin Grove, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 4QN.  
Tel: 0191 499 8188.
- MAG LIAISON OFFICER** ..... Richard Stiling, 2 Bryansons Close, Stapleton, Bristol, BS16 1ES.  
Tel: 07974 151439, E-mail: mag@trf.org.uk
- KEEPERS OF STATIONERY** ..... Leaflets & Membership Forms, Mary Stevens. *Membership Secretary.*  
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## EDITOR

### A Happy New Year to one and all.

Looking forward to 2004? In trail riding terms we should. 2003 saw Alun Michael scrap S34a because it did infringe your human rights which is what we said in the first place - however, in the same breath he proposed to give us one year to get all the byway claims in and in the same very long breath (politicians are known for being long winded) he says he doesn't want motorised vehicles on byways - so fight back on - just different rules.

Copies of DEFRA consultation paper can be requested by phoning 0845 9556000 and quoting reference PB8923, (page 32 of the document). Also in the consultation document (page 10 proposal 2) it says we invite views on the revision of the advice and guidance... in the publication Making the Best of Byways (1997), so I suggest that folk should ask for a copy of that also. It is quite likely that they won't have 3000 copies and if every one of us makes the phone call they will at least get the message that it won't just go through on the nod.

On a lighter note I was at Kirkby Lonsdale recently, a popular meeting place for road bikers and standing by a Fireblade when my daughter's five year old daughter (I'm not nearly old enough to be a grandfather) came up to me and said "Is that a girl's bike?" I replied "I don't know darling what makes you think it's a girl's bike?" she replied "It's got purple wheels and that's a girl's colour". I couldn't think of an answer but it might be something to consider when next buying a bike cos nobody wants a 'gurlie' bike do they?

*Fred Ellison*

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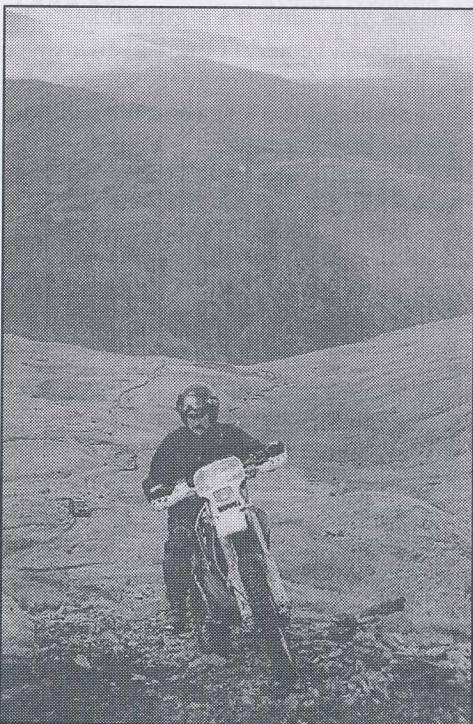
**All Contributions to the Editor ..... Please keep it short and sweet!**  
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# FROM THE CHAIRMAN...

## THE EXPERIMENTAL TRO PERMIT SYSTEM FOR MOTORCYCLES AND 4X4 VEHICLES, GATESCARTH PASS, LAKE DISTRICT, CUMBRIA.

From November 2004, for a period of twelve months a permit system will apply for all motorcyclists and 4x4 drivers wishing to use Gatescarth Pass, between Mardale and Longsleddale in Cumbria / The Lake District. The application procedure and operating details of the permit system are as follows:

1. Gatescarth Pass will be open for one day per month from November 2003 to November 2004. They will be a combination of weekends and weekdays and will be the first Friday, Saturday or Sunday of each month\*. The dates are: Friday November 7th 2003, Saturday December 6th 2003, Friday 9th January 2004\* (this is the second Friday because of proximity to New Years Day), Sunday February 1st 2004, Friday March 5th 2004, Saturday April 3rd 2004, Friday May 7th 2004, Sunday June 6th 2004, Friday July 2nd 2004, Saturday August 7th 2004, Friday September 3rd 2004, Sunday October 3rd 2004



Roger Harris, Cumbria Group Chairman, during the Gatescarth Pass Experimental TRO Permit Day

In the event of bad weather the open days will not take place. The alternative day will be exactly two weeks ahead of the original date i.e. if Friday 7th November is postponed the new date will be Friday 21st November. If the weather is also poor on the alternative day, then that month's open day will be lost.

The decision to postpone the open day will be based on the series of monthly inspections on route condition, previous weather conditions and weather forecasts for the day itself. Information will be posted on the NPA's website, via an e-mail circulation message, on the Trails Adviser's voice mail (see contact details below) and by letter 48 hours before the open day. It is important to stress however that the ultimate responsibility to check if the permit is valid lies with the permit holder.

2. A maximum of 16 4x4s (in groups of up to four vehicles - min two) and 24 motorcycles (in groups of up to six motorcycles - min two) will be allowed to use the route on each open day. If, after the first two or three open days, the passage of vehicles causes obvious

damage to the surface of the track, this will be reviewed.

3. The permit will allow one pass of the route only. The gates will be unlocked from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm for November to March and 9:00 am to 5:00 pm April to October. There will be no staggered start times but users should be aware that the latest a vehicle can start the drive of the Pass will be 1 hour before the gate is due to be locked. NPA staff will be on hand to unlock and lock gates and to ensure the permit system operates correctly.

4. All vehicles will use the route in only one direction on each open day as there are limited opportunities for passing. This will alternate between north to south and south to north and users will be told which direction to use on their permit.

5. One permit will cover all the vehicles in a club or organisations' application, subject to the limits of four 4x4s and 6 motorcycles. The minimum number of vehicles in any application is two because of problems of self-recovery. This also applies to motorcycles.

6. Each club, organisation, company or individual will be allowed two permits over the 12 months. If demand is low and not all permits or numbers are filled, this could be increased.

7. There is a deadline for booking permits in advance because all the permits for the summer months may be filled quickly and spaces could be left during the winter. There will be a summer and winter season, from 1st November 2003 to 30th April 2004 and from 1st May to 31st October 2004. Users will be able to apply for permits only up to two months in advance.

8. Application made via the LDNPA web-site can be e-mailed directly to Dave Robinson or printed off and sent by post. Forms are also available at the following Tourist Information Centres: Brockhole National Park Visitor Centre, Ambleside, Waterhead, Windermere, Bowness Bay, Kendal, Pooley Bridge, Glenridding, Grasmere, Keswick

All application forms are also on the Lake District National Park's web-site ([www.lake-district.gov.uk](http://www.lake-district.gov.uk)). Wherever they are obtained, forms should be returned to Dave Robinson, Trails Management Advisor, Lake District National Park Authority, Murley Moss Oxenholme Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7RL (tel: 01539 724555). All details requested should be filled in. If they are not, your permit may not be issued. A permit will be sent to you with the relevant open day date and other supporting information.

Geoff Wilson

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## NOTICE BOARD

### MID-WALES TRF GROUP FORMED

One of the biggest and most 'at risk' areas of prime trail riding territory is finally getting its own TRF group. After a preliminary meeting in December, the Mid-Wales TRF Group - representing riders in Powys, Ceredigion & West Herefordshire - is holding its inaugural meeting on January 28th at the Crown Inn, Rhayader starting at 7.30 pm. The meeting will outline the group's aims and elect officers. All existing and potential TRF members in the area are invited to turn up to meet fellow trail riders and help stem the tide of malign legislation aimed at our local byways.

*Mark Williams*

### LARA WORKSHOP ON DEFRA THREAT

*'Use of mechanically propelled vehicles on Rights of Way'*

DEFRA consultation document PB8923

10 am Sunday 1st February 2004  
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Saturday 7th February 2004  
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### PENSIONERS IN THE PICOS?

In March 2003 seven 'mature riders' joined George Cherry for this '70th Birthday Ride' in Hertfordshire. We know of several more active 'senior riders' amongst our ranks... Dick Sutton from mid-Wales & 'The Oldest Swinger in the West' John Chilcott. As many of you probably know George has been organising & guiding trips to the Picos Mountains of N. Spain for many years & invites you to join him for a week with a flexible itinerary tailored to the tastes of those of us who:

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4. Could be combined with/extended to a family holiday.

*I've earmarked a September departure date, so if you're interested give George a ring on 01920 413730*

# RECREATIONAL MOTORING FACES ITS BIGGEST THREAT EVER

After 100 years, during which time the highways and byways of England and Wales have been explored and enjoyed by generations of drivers and motorcyclists, a proposal just put out to consultation by DEFRA looks set to change the face of recreational motoring for ever. This change is part of the fallout from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 - the Act that introduced the 'right to roam' for hikers across thousands of square miles of private land - and is largely driven by a vocal and influential minority that wants motor vehicles out of 'their' countryside - full stop. But motorists are not entirely innocent victims. Over recent years there has been a noticeable upsurge in the levels of illegal use of the countryside - particularly 'cowboy' motorcyclists - and the use of some green roads in the countryside is exceeding sustainable levels. This illegal, or legal but questionable, motoring is a very real problem in places - but in seeking to combat it effectively, the countryside minister Alun Michael appears to be conflating the bad activities with responsible use of the countryside, and is proposing changes that will hit the law-abiding, while probably doing little against the cowboy. This is reminiscent of post-Dunblane gun controls - target shooters had their sport destroyed, whilst the rise in gun crime continues at an ever-higher rate.

To understand the proposals you need to understand a little of the arcane and confusing law that regulates our highways. In English law (and this covers Wales too) there are three types of highway: carriageways, bridleways and footpaths. Vehicles have a right of way on carriageways. Apart from roads made in modern times - such as motorways, bypasses and new estate roads - most of our roads originated 'time out of mind': their origin is simply lost in history. Old carriage roads originated in the time of horse-drawn vehicles, but as new types of vehicle emerged - steam cars, then pedal cycles, then petrol cars and motorcycles - these were accepted as 'carriages' and Parliament made legislation regulating their use on the highway. In 1930 the first proper Road Traffic Act introduced a specific offence of driving a motor on a footpath or bridleway, or on open land, 'without lawful authority'. In 1949 a new system was introduced called the 'definitive map' and this was intended to record public footpaths and bridleways, and also a curious type called a 'road used as a public path', or RUPP. Most people thought a RUPP was intended to be a minor vehicular road mainly used by walkers and riders, but the legislation was so poorly drafted that, in 1968, a new Act introduced a system to 'reclassify' all RUPPs as either footpaths, bridleways or 'byways open to all traffic' (BOAT); this did not work very well, either.

In 1981 yet another Act changed the system for reclassifying RUPPs, and also for correcting the status of the many footpaths and bridleways shown on the

definitive map that are, in truth, really old vehicular roads. This new process was better, but infernally slow and cumbersome. Few statutory orders were made to get the definitive map correct, and in many instances motorists relied on 'common law rights' to drive lawfully on mis-recorded footpaths and bridleways. The picture remained confused and uncertain.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 was mainly intended to introduce the statutory 'right to roam' for hikers. One of the 'deals' the government did with the landowners to stop this Act hitting trouble in the House of Lords was to agree to a 'cap' of the definitive map – on New Year's Day 2026, what you see on the definitive map is what legally exists – any 'slumbering rights' are extinguished. The notion of the 25-year period was to allow the establishment of a funded project called Discovering Lost Ways, which is intended to research the lost routes and get them properly recorded. Another provision – forced on the government by hiker-friendly peers at the very last moment – was known as 'Section 34A' – a modification to the Road Traffic Act 1988 that would deny motorists the fundamental human right of defending themselves in court if accused of driving on a footpath or bridleway. The motoring organisations responded to the consultation on s.34A saying that it almost certainly breached Human Rights legislation – and it turns out that the government lawyers think it would, too.

This is where the new consultation comes in. Because s.34A has been shown to be yet more rushed and defective legislation, the government must be seen to be doing something about the 'vehicle problem'. What they essentially propose is that the 'window' to 2026 will not be available to claim BOATs. They say that it is unreasonable to claim rights for mechanically propelled vehicles based on evidence that a road came into being in the age of horses and carts. This is fallacious – almost all motor roads came into being in those days, including the Great North Road, The Mall, and Parliament Square. And footpaths were, of course, originally to allow the peasantry to walk to work and to church – not for hordes of red-socked rambles on their Sunday jaunts. The time period to allow claiming BOATs based on historic evidence is proposed to be one year from when the 'register of applications' system starts. This might give a total breathing space of two years, but, equally, the minister might yield to pressure and introduce a shorter, or even immediate, cut-off.

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Once applications to add BOATs to the definitive map are properly made and lodged with highway authorities, that would (again, unless the 'antis' prevail) stop the cut-off clock on that particular lane. But it will be down to motor organisations and individuals to do all the research and considerable administrative work in making these applications.

The proposals do not affect existing properly recorded BOATs and seem to exclude from the cut-off 'unclassified county roads', but the wording is such that there is no guarantee for unclassified roads; this looks like yet more defective legislation in the making.

The recreational motoring organisations have long pursued a policy of careful, responsible and sustainable use of minor highways and private land sites in the countryside. Innovative and successful schemes like the Lake District 'Hierarchy of Trails' programme, and the issue of 'codes of conduct' advising on how to enjoy driving without causing damage or alarm, have been well received by land managers and other types of reasonable countryside users. The government publication Making the Best of Byways does not identify major or widespread problems caused by responsible drivers and riders, but confirms that problems tend to be local, mobile, and intermittent. More worryingly, DEFRA has commissioned independent research from Faber Maunsell to identify if there is a problem and currently DEFRA admits that it has no reliable data on vehicle use of unsealed roads from which to work – but irrespective of this the department is pushing ahead with the consultation document to solve a 'problem' that has not yet even been identified or quantified.

In truth, the motoring organisations are in complete agreement with the government that we should achieve a high degree of certainty as to which routes have vehicular rights, and then set about managing these fairly and effectively. There are some vehicular rights of way that cannot take a lot of motor use. The policy of the motor organisations is that a fair and proportionate management regime should be applied to these – perhaps a season access restriction; in some cases a total motor access restriction. But the fact that some green lanes are not robust does not mean that all are likely to be spoiled by the passage of vehicles – far from it. Most 'green lanes' in the sense that people use the term actually have stoned surfaces (even if now under 100 years of mud) and are very resilient if given just a little periodic rough maintenance. This has been proved by the repair programmes carried out by motor enthusiasts on ancient highways across the country – such as 'Dead Man's Hill' in the Yorkshire Dales.

The effects of these proposals if put into law as drafted – or made worse by pressure from the 'antis' – will extend beyond just the traditional responsible trail rider or driver, ambling along a public road that just happens never to have been tarmaced. There will be a subtle and inexorable shift towards 'privatisation' of whole networks of minor roads – even roughly tarmaced ones – and classic trials, road rallies, observation trials using roads to link sections, and even recreational drives out into the countryside are in danger.

The motoring organisations do not condone irresponsible and aggressive behaviour in the countryside. Our ancient highways are not scrambles practice tracks, nor a battleground to be conquered. If people want to go fast, or drive into

situations where a winch is a necessity, then they should enter competitions held on appropriate terrain. Unfortunately, our planning rules are biased against the provision of such sites, so this does not help in diverting inappropriate highway use to more-appropriate activity sites.

The motoring organisations, on behalf of responsible drivers, say it is grossly unfair to propose an ill-thought change in legislation that damages our centuries-old highway law, places a massive work burden on a relatively few ordinary individuals, takes away the rights of ordinary people enjoying an arcane, but historic, pastime, does little to tackle the root causes of the problems: cowboy drivers and inefficient local councils, and gives yet more exclusive territory to rambblers, who already enjoy more access than they can ever possibly want.

Remember: in England and Wales there is around 120,000 miles of footpaths and bridleways where motorists cannot go. There is around 6,000 miles on minor, unsealed vehicular road and, of course, much of this is also enjoyed by walkers, cyclists and riders. Walkers now have – or will soon have – thousands of square miles of open access countryside as well, plus they can wander at will on urban commons and through Forestry Commission plantations. If a rambler or cyclist does not want to share a minor road with vehicles (most horse riders are far more tolerant – maybe because they are a beleaguered minority too) then they can very easily choose to go somewhere where they will not meet a lawful vehicle. They already have exclusive rights to most of the British countryside: now they want the rest too.

All or part of these proposals will almost certainly come into law. It is up to recreational motorists everywhere to help out, either by labour or cash, with the process of researching and depositing 'byway claims', and in lobbying their Members of Parliament in the New Year to seek a reasonable set of proposals that hit the cowboy, end the uncertainty of which roads are vehicular and which are not, yet do not wipe out responsible recreational motoring.

LARA will be co-ordinating a response to the proposals, and advising club members how to approach their MPs. More to follow on this in early 2004. The closing date for responses is 19 March 2004. Copies of the consultation paper are available on the LARA and DEFRA web sites.

For more details contact the LARA Motor Recreation Development Officer at [mrdo@laragb.org](mailto:mrdo@laragb.org).

*Geoff Wilson*

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## RoW News

### RUPP1189 MILLAND/RAKE (SU821282 TO SU813271)

The following information came from a phone call from Robin Truscott Western Area Manager of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board regarding this RuPP. It is considered to be in a dangerous condition and an emergency TRO has been put on it to ban all users for 3 weeks, which will be followed by a 6-month closure until the weather improves. The SDCB are planning to do work on it in the summer and from past experience they will do what they say, and put the route into good repair.

Apparently a man from Wandsworth got stuck in a Land Rover Discovery last week and had to abandon the car for several days. It was eventually recovered by contractors working for the SDCB and the driver has been charged with the cost.

However, Robin's real concern is that on Sunday 13 trail riders in a group came down the lane despite the closure notices which were in place at the end. (There was also tape across, but that might have been pulled down earlier). They were stopped by a resident at the end and they said they were TRF. Some time later 2 more bikes came through. The notice states that there is an alternative route for pedestrians only (using a public footpath) but apparently the 13 trail riders used that as well!

Robin is watching the situation closely and he says if it happens again he will not hesitate to involve the police. I can only say that this type of TRO is legally binding and if you come across notices at the end of a lane you should read them thoroughly and if you are in doubt, do not use the route until you have checked on the situation.

I would also like to know who the 13 trail riders were. *Bevis Billingham*

### SOUTH DOWNS WAY

I spoke to several people at West Sussex C.C. today following a report (from Bill Hannant) that there had been a mention on local radio about a public inquiry into motor vehicles using the South Downs Way. Everyone I spoke to denied any knowledge of a PI, and there is nothing on the council's website.

Because of the number of letters in support and against the TRO on 952 a public inquiry will definitely be considered by the solicitor advising the cabinet member, but that does not mean that there will definitely be one. The number of letters in support of the TRO exceeded the number of objections in the ratio of about 112 to 90. *Bevis Billingham*

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# THE TRF AND THE BBC

Thursday morning, 4th December - the phone rings on Alan Kind's desk (£35 from IKEA - a bargain, and very stylish). It is Dave Loney of the TRF and ACU in West Yorkshire. It seems the local TRF representative has been contacted by BBC News 24 about a consultation from DEFRA to be issued on Tuesday 9th December (believed to be that on s.34A). ADK agrees to talk to the reporter, but is rather dubious about yet another 'hiker v. biker' item - they never get anyone anywhere. Why not, says ADK to the BBC, do something on 'lost highways', obstructions, ploughing, lack of repairs etc.?

The BBC is not unreceptive, and in the course of conversation it emerges that the forthcoming consultation, of which the BBC has an advance copy under general embargo, is not just s.34A - it is, ADK is told, rather more dramatic than that! The only way we get an advance look is to set up an interview for film the very next day. Fortunately, Richard Fordham is on a day's leave (local government, so it is hard to tell the difference) and Ray Smith is able to organise things at the office. Both present themselves at Brocolitia carpark, on the Military Road adjacent to Hadrian's Wall at 11.00 on Friday.

ADK gets an opportunity to read the advance copy of the consultation - how else can you answer questions about it - and it is a bombshell. S.34A is, as the motoring organisations argued, contrary to human rights law, but Alun Michael is now proposing to sort out the thorny issue of vehicular use on 'footpaths and bridleways' once and for all - you can read the gory details elsewhere.

It is a glorious day in Northumberland. We see no walkers, riders or cyclists on 'our' green lane (a definitive bridleway, but actually an awarded public carriage road) and not one bobble hat is observed on the multi-million pound Hadrian's Wall national trail either. This fact does not go unnoticed by the very nice lady from the BBC. Richard and Ray do their bit for the cameras (declining to ride back and forth in muddy bits, as this is not what they would do in the normal course of things) and are interviewed; the only

problem, says the BBC lady, is in editing so much good stuff down to fit a two and a half minute slot. The Ramblers were invited to send someone to be interviewed. They told the BBC that the crew would have to go to Yorkshire to see a representative (wonder who that might be?) and the BBC politely declined...

If you saw this short news item you might find it hard to believe that it took three man-days of input from the three interviewees, lots of telephoning, loss of work time and a three-chap BBC crew for the whole day.

Alan Kind

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*Being interviewed. Note how a long stretch of this 36 foot wide inclosure public carriage road has 'disappeared' into the adjoining pasture. It appears as an inclosed road on 1st edition OS, so who has had it away with the embankment and surface? Could it be ghostly townies, or worse - evil trail riders? I mean, it wouldn't be the landowner - he's a guardian of the countryside... Oh by the way, Richard fell in love with the interviewer.*

## GROUP NEWS

### KENT GROUP

Group runs will take place on the following Saturdays/Sundays (depending on who is leading) meeting place will be decided at the group meeting. To avoid large groups places will have to be booked. All group runs meet at 09.00 leaving at 09.30, please be prompt

17 - 18 January	Chilham
14 - 15 February	Dover
13 - 14 March	Sevenoaks
17 - 18 April	Chiddingfold
15 - 16 May	Maidstone
12 - 13 June	Shadoxhurst
12 - 13 June	BMF Garden of England Show, Whitbread Hop Farm
17 - 18 July	Essex
14 - 15 August	Hindhead
11 - 12 September	Herefordshire
16 - 17 October	Chilham
13 - 14 November	Dover
11 - 12 December	Dorking

*Richard Colquhoun*



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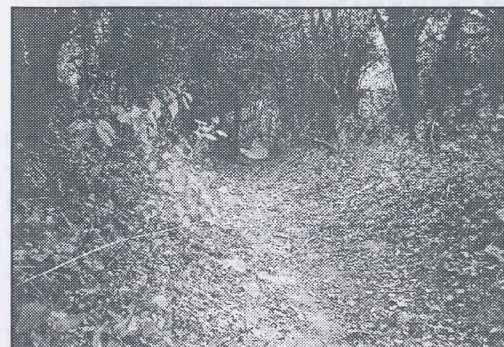
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## Really Ancient Lanes



*Hardwell Way. Looking South*

natural features such as streams, large rocks, trees and ROADS.

Many hundreds of these Saxon Charters still exist in our better libraries such as the Bodleian in Oxford and can be consulted to provide information on the country as it was before the Norman invasion of 1066.

As they are written in archaic language and an archaic script they are not easy to read in their original form. For example the Saxons would have written 'Aerest on heafð beorh'. Which means first to the headland barrow i.e. start at the burial mound on the headland.

Fortunately for us non-scholars many have been translated into modern English so are quite accessible to us.

One little lane that I frequently ride is a few miles west of Wantage in Berkshire and is called Hardwell Way. It is only about a mile long and although normally very pleasant can be a bit of a challenge after a lot of rain. I had never thought of it as especially old until I found that it was mentioned in a charter dated 903 AD.

The charter is setting out the boundaries of Hardwell Farm now the Parish of Compton Beauchamp and it states 'First along Swinbrook, up the rush hollow and then from a bend in rush hollow up onto Hardwell Way; along the way until it comes to Icknield Way, then from the way up on to Old Wood Way along the side of Tell's Camp' etc.

What I find so interesting is that all these features which were so clear to the Saxons in 903 AD are just as clear to us today, eleven hundred years later. The Swinbrook still follows the same course. Rush hollow is now a drainage channel. Hardwell Way is a track through fields and a wood. The Icknield Way is now the B4507. Old Wood Way is a dead end leading off the B4507 and Tell's Camp is an unnamed series of earthworks in a copse just to the south of the B4507.

Not only are these signs clear on the ground but we may even be able to use these ancient documents to prove the existence of lanes that have been in use 'Time out of mind'.

*Bob Combley*



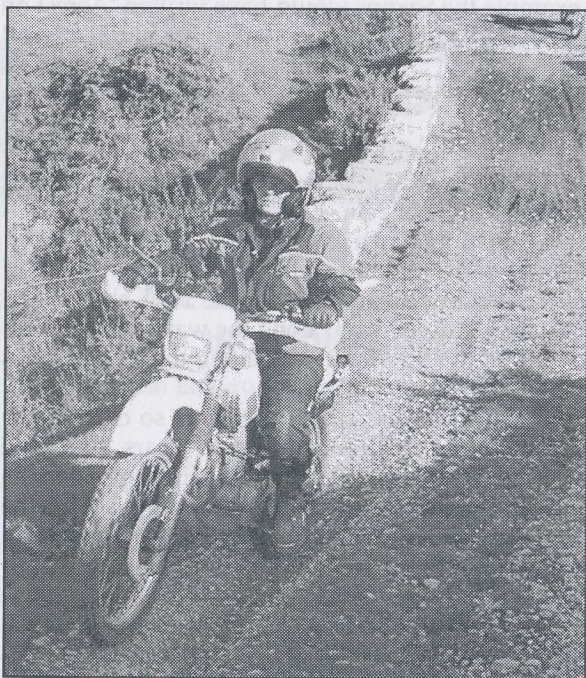
# STAND UP!!

## (OR THE DIARY OF A NOVICE WHO IS ACTUALLY OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW BETTER)

After a long absence from the biking scene apart from dusting the two veterans in the garage, my other half decided to buy a trail bike to take up to Orkney on our annual diving holiday to Scapa Flow (stick with me – it will make sense). This would give us the freedom to explore the islands during the hours when we weren't actually under the water (he said)! Prior to this we had wasted this time lazing about, eating, drinking, reading, sleeping, etc. as most people do on holiday.

A Yamaha XT 350 was duly located and purchased, after a Sunday morning outing to Yorkshire, and we duly set off on the road to the isles.

It was good to be back on the pillion but I must have overdone the enthusiasm because before I knew it I was at the sharp end, reacquainting myself with the intricacies of the controls and carrying out four different actions with each of my extremities (throttle, clutch, gear lever, brake) – a bit like playing the drums I am told, but with more disastrous consequences if you get it wrong.



Me on the Wayfarers

The highlight of this first adventure was proceeding (perhaps that should be careering) down a steep shale path with the other half screaming in my ear – CHANGE DOWN!! On being informed that I was already in first gear he changed his cry to BRAKE!!

Having survived this experience, it was then suggested that I should get a bike of my own as, being 'vertically challenged' the distance from the seat to the ground on the XT was considerably longer than my legs. So after various consultations and advice from 'friends in the know' we took

another Sunday morning trip to Yorkshire and purchased a very smart blue Serow. Fired with enthusiasm we also joined the TRF about this time then duly set off for Orkney again – for two weeks this time to allow more time for bike riding and other pursuits normally considered unsuitable for a group who, though not quite geriatric, are certainly approaching their sell-by dates.

Shortly after our return we attended our first TRF meeting (of the Lancashire group) and were made very welcome by Keith Westley, et al, and invited to join a club run the following Sunday. Perhaps unwisely we decided I would go on the pillion of the XT as I had very little experience of off road riding (a few miles in Orkney)! Suffice to say this provided great sport for the chap who was riding behind us. My enduring memory is of reaching the top of a long, steep, stony track (wondering what the h\*!\$ I was doing there) when the pilot decided to STAND UP. I duly slid forward on the seat and the next thing we knew he was sitting on my knees!

Nevertheless we survived – somehow - and I was persuaded to ride the Serow on the next club run. "It will be easy" said Keith (I hadn't found out about him at this stage). The run proved quite an experience and I discovered that the advantage of short legs is that you can paddle your way through the ruts without banging your knees on your helmet. The day ended ignominiously when I abandoned the Serow – parked upright in a considerable bog – and made for the nearest waterhole on the back of the XT. A recovery party retrieved the Serow and the nice people from Lancashire TRF all assured me that I had done quite well for a beginner and it was very hot, etc. etc, but I would find it all much easier if I learned to STAND UP.

After my bruises had faded and perhaps unwisely, I agreed to go out again the next month. "It will be easy" said Keith (Hmmm). It wasn't that easy! The enduring memory of this day is riding down a very steep, narrow, rocky path in a state of abject shock and, having cleared what looked like a two foot high kerbstone which appeared near some houses at the bottom, slithering to a halt inches from a main road as an extremely large HGV appeared. This time I wiped out the other elbow, burned my leg on the exhaust and shrivelled the sleeve of a rather nice ski jacket. On the way home I was complimented on how well I had done – "you were really moving down



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those tight hairpins" he said, (I thought it best not to mention that I had knocked it into neutral, stalled the engine and restarted it with the magic button while I was going down those tight hairpins!). "And you'll find the climbs and the rough stuff much easier when you learn to STAND UP".

Oh, and just for the record – the other half's enduring memory of that day is when I managed to dismount rather neatly at one point rather than landing in my usual heap, then promptly fell over the back wheel (flat on my face) as I went to hold his bike while he picked mine up for me. I rode the next couple of miles to the sound of raucous laughter from behind!!

After that experience I nursed my bruises and put the bike away for the winter, but not before I was persuaded to buy a proper jacket and trousers!!

Christmas morning dawned and amongst my surprises was a large box containing a pair of black and bright blue riding boots – colour coordinated or what? The family arrived to find me cooking the dinner wearing my Christmas finery and my new boots! As a footnote to this part of the story, person or persons unknown decided to relieve me of my nice blue Serow (along with the other half's Christmas present to himself – a recently purchased nearly-new DRZ) in the early hours of 3rd January. With the help of our insurers replacements were acquired but as the new Serow is purple, green and white I'm afraid the colour-coordination has now gone out of the window.

With the dawn of 2003 the O.H. decided he would like to 'have another go at enduros' – the last one having been completed (or not as the case may be) circa 1982. He duly signed up for a rally in the Kielder Forest, where we met up with some old friends from our biking days – Jim and Dot Jones.

The Serow remained firmly in the garage until our Orkney trip in June and I have yet to venture on another TRF run, but a Sunday in the Yorkshire Dales, which resulted in nothing more serious than a wrenched shoulder and RSI in my wrists, went some way to increase my confidence – I didn't even smash the mirror this time! On the way home I received the usual pep talk with the assurance that I would find it all so much easier after I learned to STAND UP.

Nevertheless it was with some trepidation that I ventured out for Jim Jones' 65th birthday bash – a trail run in

the Ceiriog Valley! The plan was for 'the boys' to go with Jim on the fast and furious route, whilst Dot led the ladies on a gentler, scenic tour. As there were only two ladies, two chivalrous gentlemen declared themselves a little rusty and joined us for the morning. Apart from a couple of little hiccups and one incident when I used a barbed wire fence as a brake, all went well and the slow 'ladies' group arrived at the prearranged lunch stop about an hour and a half ahead of the 'experts'.

After lunch, despite my comments on calling it a day, we set off over the Wayfarers path with the two 'gents' now joining the fast group and the O.H. joining Dot and myself. This was moderately pleasurable and I surprised myself with some of the climbs I accomplished, but totally exhausting. At the end of the day Dot, who had been the soul of patience and very encouraging in the face of my inadequacies gave me this advice – "don't give up, keep trying, you will find it a lot easier when you learn to STAND UP".

There is just one problem here – if I try to raise my rear from the seat I am gripped by terror, I have quite enough trouble dealing with the gear lever from a sitting position, so if I try it standing up I'm likely to fall off – and I can do that extremely well from a sitting position.

Perhaps the next time the advice is offered, I should just reply "I am STANDING UP" – after all, I'm sure nobody would be able to tell the difference!

Oh well – maybe next time!

Sue Hamilton

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# Trail Riders Coast to Coast Event Takes Off

The Somerset trail riders fellowship (TRF) recently held a two day South West Coast to Coast event in aid of the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance. The event, which attracted riders from all over the country started at Minehead on the north coast and finished at Seaton on the south coast. Brian Bailey, editor of the Somerset TRF group newsletter said supporting the Air Ambulance is vitally important to us as our recreational activity takes us on



Tony Eslick receives a £200 cheque from Brian Bailey on behalf of the Somerset TRF, pictured with Paramedics Damian Nineham, Phil Whaites & Trail Riders Graeme Alexander & Nick Read.

many of the old historical roads in the countryside. In the event of a rider having an illness or accident, these remote areas can only be reached quickly by a helicopter. We were delighted by the success of our first coast to coast event and being able to support the charity funded Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance.

A CD Rom of the event, with over 300 images, is now available if you would like a copy please send a cheque payable to 'Somerset TRF' for five pounds (this includes P&P with the profit going to the Somerset TRF fighting fund/Air Ambulance Trust) to Brian Bailey, 13 Ridgeway, West Chinnock, Crewkerne, Somerset, TA18 7PY.

Brian Bailey

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# ✉ letters

## SMEATHES RIDGE

In the November issue of the Bulletin that I received about the 20th you mentioned that Wiltshire County Council intended to permanently ban motorised vehicles from Smeathes Ridge a trail that runs from Barbury Castle to Ogbourne St George.

On the 23rd November I wrote to Wiltshire Council objecting very strongly to this proposed closure.

On the 26th November Mr A. K. Wyatt of the Environmental Services Department wrote to say that my letter had arrived too late to be included in the report that was to go before the Regulatory Committee on the 17th December.

On the 4th December I again wrote to Mr Wyatt saying how disturbed I was that a letter written on the 23rd November could not be presented to a committee that was not meeting until the 17th of the following month.

Smeathes Ridge is well known to me and I can see no reason whatsoever for its closure to motorised traffic, apart from the usual one of getting motor vehicles off all trails by whatever method.

I would like to know when the TRF heard about the proposed closure as it seems to me that if it was only shortly before the club newsletter was published then they are deliberately making it almost impossible for anyone to object.

R Combley

## TOO LATE

The request in November's TRAIL, RoW news, for objection letters, Smeathe's Ridge proposed TRO, was too late. I wrote and was informed that the cut off was October 27th.

To be blunt, as soon as there is a whiff of a proposed TRO tell us, get it into TRAIL double quick. Editor, prioritise RoW news. Lets get efficient and campaign effectively.

Nigel Rangecroft

Ed. In reply to this and the previous letter. RoW is ALWAYS prioritised in TRAIL I picked this item out of the Wiltshire Newsletter, October edition, sorry to hear it was too late. Interestingly both of these letters arrived by what is often disparagingly referred to as 'snail mail' that is in an envelope with a stamp affixed, far too many people feel that sending a few emails or putting something on the web will result in ALL interested parties being informed. A recent straw poll at a group meeting of 15 people showed that only 2 of those present had email on-line or ready access - not the 50% plus of the membership which is usually thought of as being avidly trawling the e.ways. On top of which many of our members do not for one reason or another regularly attend a group meeting.

So PLEASE use TRAIL to keep ALL members informed and if there is a deadline, include this also.

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## GROUPS

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**BLACK COUNTRY** Martin Bond, Tel: 07971 551352 or Nick Hammond, Tel: 01902 700749  
1 & 3 Tues, 9pm, The Mitre, Church Road, Bradmore, Wolverhampton

**BRISTOL** Bob Chapman, Tel: 0117 960 9660  
4th Mon, 8pm, Keynsham Rugby Club, Bristol Road, Keynsham

**CAMBRIDGE** John Brooker, Tel: 01767 692805  
1st Thurs, Golden Ball, Boxworth

**CORNWALL** Sally Madgwick, Tel: 01208 74411  
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**CUMBRIA** Anthony Hayhurst, Tel: 01539 721115  
2nd Tues, Derby Arms Hotel, Witherslack, Nr. Kendal

**DERBYSHIRE & SOUTH YORKSHIRE**  
Kevin Marsh, Tel: 01246 811949  
2 & 4 Tuesdays, The Angel Hotel, Sprinkhill, Eckington, Nr. Chesterfield, Derbyshire

**DEVON** Rob Williams, Tel: 01626 364564  
2nd Tues, 8pm, The Welcome Stranger, Bickington, Nr. Newton Abbott

**DORSET** Martin Diamond, Tel: 01202 571325  
1st Tues, 8pm, 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 YORKSHIRE** Peter Hall, Tel: 01405 862616  
1st Tues, The Plough, Snaith

**ESSEX** Dave Anderson, Tel: 01277 657783  
2nd Wed, The Wheatsheaf Public House, Hatfield Peveral.  
4th Wed, The White Hart Public House, High Street, Billericay (social meeting).

**EXMOOR** Ian Sadler, Tel: 01884 821547  
2nd Wed, 8pm, The Hartnoll Hotel, Bolham, A396 1 mile north of Tiverton

**GLOUCESTER** Geoff Wilkie, Tel: 01453 811412  
1st Wed, 8pm, Wagonworks Club, Tuffley Ave., Gloucester

**HERTFORDSHIRE** Dave West, Tel: 07768 402424  
2nd Thurs, 8pm, The Old Guinea, Ridge, Near Potters Bar

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**ISLE OF WIGHT** Andy Hawkins, Tel: 01983 617232  
1st Wed, 8pm, The Eight Bells Inn, Carisbrooke, Newport, IOW

**KENT** Anthony Evans, Tel: 01732 360884  
2nd Wed, 9pm, Pied Bull, Farningham, Off A20, Nr Brands Hatch

**LANCASHIRE** Keith Westley, Tel: 01704 893215  
1st Tues, Hindshead Pub on A49, Charnock Richard

**LINCOLNSHIRE** Paul Vernon, Tel: 01522 889079  
4th Thurs, 8pm, Manvers Arms, Monks Road, Lincoln

**LODDON VALE** David Cook, Tel: 0118 901 4481  
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**NORTHUMBERLAND** Chris Moody  
Tel: 0191 387 3507 6-10pm or 07860 302001 (mobile)  
1st Tues, 8pm, The Swan, Heddou on Wall.

**NORTH WALES** Richard Hughes, Tel: 01244 533855  
1st Wed, 8pm, Cross Keys, Buckley, OS 117 290 637

**NORWICH** John Jenkins, Tel: 07721 880463  
2nd Wed, 7.30pm, White Horse, Trowse, Norwich.

**OXFORDSHIRE** Peter Cole, Tel: 01844 214075  
3rd Thurs, The Red Lion, Cassington.

**PEAK DISTRICT** Neil Walker, Tel: 01788 811919  
1st Thurs, 8pm, Travellers Rest, Ashbourne Road, Derby.

**RIBBLE VALLEY**  
Mark Wolstenholme, Tel: 01282 432088  
2nd Tues, Pendle Hotel, Chatburn, Clitheroe (off A59).

**SHROPSHIRE** Rob Latham, Tel: 01952 592324  
2nd & last Wed, White Horse, Shrewsbury.

**SOMERSET** Greg Hughes, Tel: 07887 821472  
2nd Thurs, 8pm, The Bell Hotel, Curry Rivel, Nr. Taunton.

**SOUTHERN** Lee Wildsmith, Tel: 02380 611110  
3rd Thurs, Southampton & District MCC, Woodside Ave., Eastleigh, (opposite Halfords).

**SOUTH LONDON & SURREY**  
Steve Sharp, 0208 773 4204  
9pm 1st Wed, Carshalton United Ex Service Club, West Street, Carshalton, Surrey.

**SOUTH NORTHANTS**  
Trevor Gardiner, Tel: 01788 815927  
2nd Mon, 9pm, The Live & Let Live Pub, Harpole, Nr. Northampton.

**SOUTH WALES** Stuart Dodwell, Tel: 01446 710851  
1st Thurs, Welsh Institute of Sport, Cardiff, 8pm.

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

**SWINDON** Phil Male, Tel: 01793 731777  
1st Wed, 8.30pm, The Carrier's Arms at South Marston, Swindon.

**SUSSEX** Nick Harris, Tel: 01798 344594  
Last Thurs, Ashington Social Club, Rear of Red Lion, A24, 9 miles North of Worthing.

**TEESSIDE & NORTH YORKS**  
Roger Preston, Tel: 01429 837093  
3rd Tues, The Ranch House, Thoraldby Farm, Nr Stokesley, map ref 93...493074

**THAMES VALLEY** Gary Hiller, Tel: 01932 851291  
3rd Mon, District Arms, Woodthorpe Rd, Ashford, Middlesex.

**WEST ANGLIA** David Knight, Tel: 01933 313816  
1st & 3rd Thurs, Scott Bader Social Club, opp. Parish Church, Wollaston, Wellingborough.

**WEST MIDLANDS** Simon Mills, Tel: 01926 332982  
1st & 3rd Thurs, Wilmcote Mens Club, Stratford on Avon.

**WEST YORKSHIRE** Gordon Carr, Tel: 01729 830569  
1st & 3rd Thurs, Bankfoot Cricket Club, Wickets Close, (off Cleckheaton Rd), Odsal, Bradford.

**WILTSHIRE** Vic Price, Tel: 01380 724651  
1st Tues, The Bell On The Common, Broughton Gifford.

**WORCESTERSHIRE**  
Steve Hobby, Tel: 01562 820121 Mob: 07970 929029  
1st and 3rd Tuesday, White Hart, Fernhill Heath, Worcs.