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TRAIL

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

MARCH 2004 No. 307



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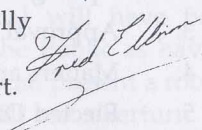
EDITOR

Below is a press release from The British Horse Society. Your first reaction will probably be shock, horror or disgust after all the efforts TRF members have made to co-exist with equestrians both in helping at horse events and in treating horses and their riders with more consideration than they can reasonably expect on public roads. However, the consideration shown on the lanes, which is part of our constitution, must not end.

I do not think that this is necessarily the view of many BHS people but it is time to call in the favours or use any influence you may have to get this statement changed.

It is worth pointing out that if motor vehicles are removed from byways horses and mountain bikes are next on the hit list and that, to coin a phrase, is from the horse's mouth, well actually

Michael Bartholomew of GLEAM who has said that removing motor vehicles from the green lanes is only the start.



PRESS RELEASE - 27 FEBRUARY 2004

British Horse Society Board of Trustees vote on Defra's consultation paper on mechanically propelled vehicles

At yesterday's (26 February) Board meeting, Trustees of The British Horse Society (BHS) voted to approve the following statement.

"The policy of The British Horse Society is to seek to increase all opportunities for off-road riding. Limiting access on rights of way for mechanically propelled vehicles will increase safety for our horses and riders."

The BHS has pledged to prepare a submission on the Defra consultation paper to that effect. BHS chief executive, Kay Driver, said, "I am very pleased that the Board has confirmed the Society's policy. It is in accordance with the wishes of our members, our active volunteers and many affiliated bridleways groups.

It is important that our response to Government consultation papers is in the best interests of our members and all horse riders and we needed to discuss our policy at Board level once we had the views of all concerned".

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COVER PHOTO by Charlie Morriss
Southern section of Sarn Helen, above Resolven. Looking North.

All Contributions to the Editor Please keep it short and sweet!
COPY DEADLINE: FIRST POST, 1ST TUESDAY OF MONTH

MEETING OF THE TRF EXECUTIVE

Saturday 20th March

Lilleshall National Sports Centre

Newport, Shropshire, TF10 9AT

10.00 for 10.30

AGENDA

1. Chairman's introduction and report.
2. Apologies for absence
3. Approval of Minutes of Meeting 17th Jan 2004
4. Matters arising
5. Elected Officer Reports (prioritise on important points please):
Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership, Rights of Way,
Public Relations, Editor etc. etc.
6. Consultation Paper – Use of Mechanically Propelled Vehicles
on Rights of Way.
Response and Planning a Strategy:
 1. TRF response.
 2. How to get other groups (cycling clubs, fishing clubs etc.,) involved
 3. What next?
7. Use of definitive bridleways
8. Support for equestrian / BHS events.
9. Terms for providing legal assistance to members
10. GLASS Wayfinder database – where are we?
11. Honorary Membership to MP's and Lords
12. TRF Subscriptions
13. Travel Expenses
14. Rights of Way Project Coordination / Research & Claim.
15. Non Active Groups
16. Mid Wales Group
17. The status of UCRs - Research
18. AOB (At chairman's discretion)

Target finishing time 16.00



RoW News

RoW REMINDER

A reminder to members to only use trails for which they know that a byway claim is being made. If in doubt then only use UCRs, particularly if the local Police Service has given a warning. Remember that in the event of a prosecution it is the individual that is charged and not the TRF! The CROW Act has already changed the onus of proof of higher rights from the prosecution to the defendant. That is why the Police Service have been encouraged to make prosecutions. If any defendant pleads guilty to a S.34 offence, that individual will have been successfully prosecuted, the Police Service will be seen by the Public as having done something. If others in the same group decide that they can present a robust defence and are successful in avoiding prosecution, this will not overturn the successful prosecution of the individual who chose to plead guilty. In summary, all successful prosecutions are almost going to set a perceived precedent in the minds of the Public, even though one might argue from a ROW standpoint that they are a miscarriage of justice. If you are not prepared to plead 'not guilty' to a S.34 offence, then you should not be riding that route!

Roger Peters

National RoW Co-ordinator

NORTH YORK LANES

The police and park rangers are patrolling the forests around Scarborough looking for motorcyclists using illegal lanes. A group from West Yorks were stopped using the lane just south of the car park in Thornton-le-dale. After a brief discussion they were all issued with £30 fixed penalty fines for riding a bridleway. The rest of the day passed without incident although more patrols were spotted during the day, the moral, neigh, financial point of this sorry tale is: know where you're going and that you have a right to be there.

Leo Crone

Teeside & North Yorks RoW Officer

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NORTHUMBERLAND GROUP NEW MEETING PLACE

North Durham Motorclub, Annfield Plain,
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Time and date remain the same, 1st Tuesday
of the Month at 8.00pm

Richard Fordham

AXE VALE GROUP

The Star has been closed for redevelopment. All members please call Malcolm, 01275 844757, to find out where the next meeting will be held. We are hoping to find an equally convenient venue, with decent real ale and a room suitable for sensitive TRF 'discussions' - and FOC too!!

David Clegg

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Mirror Image?

The 'Notice Board' slot in TRAIL 305 regarding seven 'mature riders' evoked happy memories. I was privileged to be one of the seven on that '70th birthday ride in Hertfordshire'. Relaxed riding, differing horizons, time to stop and stare along the way - great! On peering at the group photo it looks as if all had a handlebar mirror which doesn't seem to be the vogue now.

A pity really I would have thought, especially in relation to a tumble on the trail when perhaps a) unable to rise single handed and waiting there for colleagues to count heads at the end of the lane before returning; as opposed to b) with the incident seen in a rear view mirror prompting a quicker response! Ride safely - 'it's not only T'owd uns as falls orft'.

Derrick Collins, East Midlands Group

Motor Vehicles on Unsealed Byways

Andrew Brocklehurst, chairman of the North Yorkshire Trail Management Advisory Group, responds to Michael Bartholomew, and seeks a research-based climate for sophisticated management of recreational use of byways by motor vehicles, which also respects the historical nature of the routes"

I am a Dalesman, born and brought up in the Yorkshire Dales and I now live and work near Settle, within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It is clear to me that Mr. Bartholomew invokes a great many half-truths, in support of his campaign to ban motor vehicles from ancient carriageways. Firstly, the matter of Gorbeck Road - just a few miles from my home - which I know very well.

Mr. Bartholomew is correct that the Inspector after the public inquiry found in favour of a byway; the evidence plainly guided that he should. All this has done is to record on the definitive map the vehicular rights that already existed. No new right of way has been created.

A large plank of Mr. Bartholomew's argument against vehicular use of lanes such as Gorbeck Road relies on a subjective assessment of 'suitability' and extraordinary damage allegedly caused by recreational motor vehicles.

The reality is that since time immemorial these routes have been subject to damage by use. Read the accounts of Lady Anne Clifford, daughter of the 3rd Earl of Cumberland, and born in Skipton Castle. The accounts of her travels along these same routes in her carriage in the 17th century refer to damage caused by horse and cart. Not only modern motor vehicles cause disturbance to a track's surface! The answer is not dissimilar to that applied



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in Lady Anne's day, when road maintenance was the responsibility of local people. In the Dales, voluntary groups such as the Ancient Roads Conservation Volunteers have successfully repaired routes in partnership with the county council. The council provides the materials, and volunteer labour uses it: everybody wins.

Mr. Bartholomew's other argument is that these routes were never designed for motor vehicle use. But it is also true that the majority of footpaths were not designed, or dedicated, for recreational use, or the volumes of traffic created by ramblers. Footpaths on Ingleborough have been repaired by the use of inelegant stone slabs, some of which look like kerbstones, flown in by helicopter. The solution on Ingleborough, as ever, is sensitive maintenance to suit the purpose and location. When footpaths on any number of moors are no longer able to support the level of use to which they are subjects we do not hear calls for the banning of walkers. Of course not; but why is the same level of understanding not applied to users of old carriageways? It appears that Mr. Bartholomew has no time for cooperating with other users and will only be satisfied when he establishes exclusive rights for walkers alone. *Ed. Believe me that means walkers only!*

In the area in which I was brought up and live, there are many definitive footpaths that were originally only 'farmers' ways', being direct routes across meadows from one farm to another.

They were never intended for recreational walking, but the definitive map process scooped them up and now routes that were once used only occasionally for farm use are trampled by thousands of pairs of boots - we even have appeals to walk in single file so that the adjacent meadowland is not scarred. Now there are calls to tear down the old stone stiles and create gateways for disabled access. Hardly the original intent of such routes? If, to accommodate shifts in public awareness and demands, we can create gateways on some old routes where none traditionally existed, then surely we can maintain some routes

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for recreational motor vehicular use as well? And, perhaps, Mr. Bartholomew adopts a perverse view that it is alright for him to drive his car from within urban West Yorkshire and drive in to the heart of the Yorkshire Dales, on crowded lanes, possibly parking his car in an already crowded village, put on his walking boots and then proceed along another lane that may or may not have escaped the tarmac machine.

Then Mr. Bartholomew introduces misleading data for lengths of various classes of rights of way in an attempt to emphasise what he suggests is a threat to a high percentage of routes in the Yorkshire Dales. To calculate his figures and percentages he assumes (to suit his arguments) that all of the 500km of what he calls 'unsealed rights of way' in the Yorkshire Dales National Park are "green roads", but stops short of telling readers that many of these have been covered in tarmac and are dead-ends to hamlets and farms. Neither does he take account of the fact that a considerable length of UCRs (unclassified county roads) are also marked on the definitive map as either footpaths or bridleways, resulting in blatant double-counting.

Again, to suit his arguments, Mr. Bartholomew uses only the 1,500 km. of footpaths that feature on the definitive map when drawing comparisons. However there are many hundreds of kilometres of footpaths that appear on OS maps and in guides (including one 100 metres from my home) which are not on the definitive map.

He has excluded these routes in order to maximise his percentage in his headline-grabbing phrase ". . . it is perfectly possible that over 20% of the park's unsealed rights of way will turn out legally to be open to motors." What purpose does giving such misleading information serve? How can we reach fair solutions if one of the interested parties insists on presenting false information that leads to others feeling mistreated? Further, Mr. Bartholomew makes the quite ridiculous assertion that as a result of research every current definitive bridleway in the Dales National Park will become a byway open to all traffic (BOAT). Few will, and for every route found to be byway there will be another that is added to the definitive map at a lower status. Nor does he acknowledge that there are more footpaths and bridleways waiting to be discovered than there ever will be byways; or that new footpaths and bridleways can be put on a map, but no new byways can be created. Nor does he make any allowance for the fact that walkers may also legally use bridleways, byways, RUPPS and UCRs, so making the whole of the rights of way network available to them. I will now give you some facts that are more informed than Mr. Bartholomew's. I may be generous in assuming that only two-thirds of footpaths in the Yorkshire Dales National Park are shown on the definitive map. In addition to these there are many permissive routes and

others shown on OS maps and in guides that are not definitive. We can therefore safely assume that there is at least 2250 km of footpath and, additionally, about 600km of definitive bridleway. By my estimate only 20% of the UCRs in the area are "green lanes" with no tarmac: approximately 100kms. A quick calculation suggests that 30% of "green" UCRs are 'double-recorded' as footpaths or bridleways.

So for statistical purposes we can reduce the 100km figure to approx. 65km of UCR. The consequence of this is that approximately 2800 km of non-tarmac route is available to walkers, of which just 128km are open to vehicle users. This reveals that less than 5% of the network in the Yorkshire Dales is vehicular.

That is only some half a point above the national average, and a long way short of the 20% that Mr. Bartholomew peddles to ministers and anyone else who is unlikely to challenge him, or know any better. But even that percentage is further reduced in some locations by the suspension of vehicular use through application of TROs (sometimes, where joint management regimes exist, with vehicle users' agreement and assistance). In addition, within two years, walkers will have the 4% of "open country" currently available to them in the Yorkshire Dales increased to 63%. The effect of which will be to increase the 95% of territory that is currently almost exclusively reserved for them even further. Recreational vehicle users do not resent this, but we seek the reasonable opportunity to retain and help manage use of the 4% - 5% of RoW that we currently have access too.

Additionally, evidence gathered in other places indicates that recreational vehicles are present on joint facility routes for less than 1% of the time anyway. Is it unreasonable to ask those who do not wish to risk meeting a motor vehicle on a trail route to choose from the 95%+ of routes (and "open country") on which they will meet only farmers and landowners, or other walkers (some of whom have driven their cars past other people's homes to get to their start, and have quite possibly parked obtrusively close to others' homes while they seek their own solitude)?

The Trail Management Advisory Group on which I serve appreciates many of the points that Mr. Bartholomew makes concerning the evolving use of routes that are now termed 'right of way'.

That byways are no longer used for the same purpose that they came into being is as true as the fact that almost no footpaths or bridleways are now used for visiting neighbours, taking produce to the market, or to get to the mine, the cowshed or to church or chapel. That many footpaths in the Dales may suffer the pounding of more vibrate soled feet in one week than they experienced in a year in the days before there was such a thing as leisure for the masses, is of

no less concern to me than the use of byways by trail motorcycles or 4x4 vehicles. Both are changes of use that need management, but not exclusion. In a tolerant (read civilised) society there is no statistical or moral case for blanket-restricting vehicle use on rights of way.

The current balance of use surely cannot be regarded as unreasonable, and vehicle users do not seek to increase it. But even this does not preclude, of course, the ever present need to manage use of all kinds on a location-by-location basis, and according to the many objective criteria that must be applied to the management and of historic roads in beautiful and sensitive places. Unfortunately Mr. Bartholomew's group has so far resisted the creation of a mechanism through which route-by-route management can be applied.

That some people seek legislation made on a basis of false analysis and totally misleading information as presented by Mr. Bartholomew and the Yorkshire Dales Green Lane Alliance, on whose behalf he speaks, is unthinkable and unacceptable. Users and the routes themselves deserve better. Other processes now need to be employed to manage appropriately the use of these routes in ways that satisfy (as far as possible) all lawful and reasonable users.

Andrew Brocklehurst



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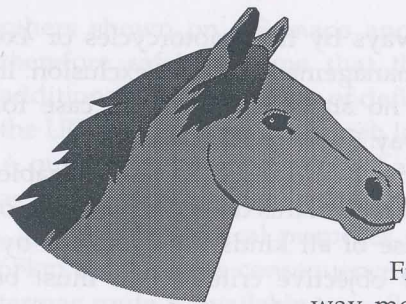
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From The Horse's Mouth

Firstly let me say how much I appreciate the way most motor cyclists treat us. It's almost as if they sense we cannot be treated like rational beings. In my experience, motorcyclists are extremely courteous and I'm lucky that most people we share the roads with give us plenty of space and slow down when overtaking in either direction.

I've been around a long time and even though me and my rider are arthritic and elderly, I still enjoy our outings and am sane enough not to do anything stupid in the normal run of things. But given difficult circumstances, I couldn't swear I'd not throw a wobbly, and probably my rider! I can see over hedges which most drivers cannot – I can see a herd of bullocks careering towards me and that fence doesn't look as though it would stop 'em. I can hear dogs barking and running at me and to me, they are still predators. Cocooned in vehicles or protected by helmets, sometimes with music on or kids yelling in your ear, you can't hear what I hear and I've no way of letting you know. Our riders usually have no choice but to use the public highways to get off-road for some exercise and enjoyment. So thank you for being careful when you see us out and about.

Talking of enjoyment, we've recently had a few tricky moments on local bridlepaths. Here's where we need some help from you. A few youngsters have got motorbikes, or scooter things – I'm out of touch with what's what – "proper" motor bikes I recognise but don't know what to call these more adventurous things stripped down used for thrills and spills - I can see they're great fun for their riders, and

much more agile than me and my old lady. We have to be careful in this area as it's stoney with a very steep bank – one false move and we'd be over the edge and I shudder to think of the consequences – a broken leg for the missus would lay her up for months - her old bones wouldn't mend as well as a youngster's, and as for me..... I guess you know a broken leg means curtains for a horse, and I hope I've got a fair few more years of happy retirement left for me.

We all need space to exercise and play but also need to be aware of the dangers in not understanding each other. My hearing is very acute and loud noise hurts my ears; anything whizzing up to me spells danger and that means "get the hell out of here" to save my skin. Strange shapes and movement are a threat – I know, I know, it all sounds daft to you who master these motor things – but I can't help it, I'm a flight animal and that's what I was created. Even with the best training in the world, instinct is never far from the surface. Usually I'm one of the best and my old lady is calm and confident, but there are plenty of others – horses and riders - who are not so settled. Kids on their ponies (and they're bloody minded creatures at times) are at risk and I don't think anyone would want to cause them deliberate harm.

So I'm asking if you can spread the word among your fellow enthusiasts and especially the younger ones just starting with motor bikes. Please understand some horses can be manic in strange situations with loud noises. Us saddle sorts should be sympathetic to each other – we get enough flack from other quarters. And thanks for reading my meanderings.

Submitted by Sally Madgwick

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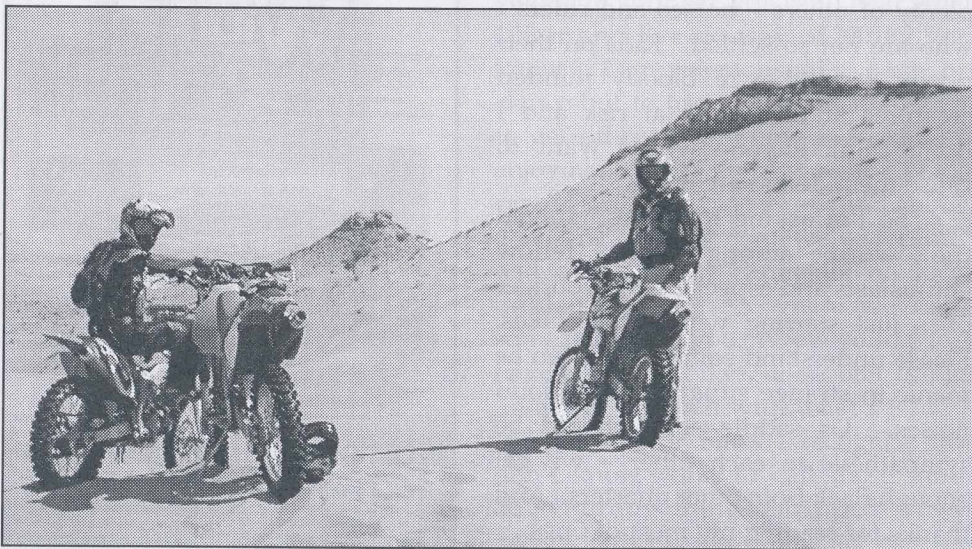
Remember Robert 'Expat Man' West, the Notts Trail Rider living in Dubai who appeared in Trail about this time last year? Expat Man was riding the dirt from Argentina to Alaska. Ever wondered what happened to him??

Well I became so fed up of writing about his adventures that I decided to join him on an XR 400 (Mid Life Crisis, Menopausal Man, hot flushes and sweatsthat's what I told my beloved wife anyway, so she let me go. No divorce papers pending yet anyway !

Bob West, Dubai, writes at the end of his Americas trip:

"In last December's TRAIL there was a picture of me in Dubai before departing to Buenos Aires, well here is an update. I arrived in Argentina and almost immediately met up with John Wilson and Gerry Tiernan (www.GSRTW.com) on their world trip. We travelled together to Ushuaia then north to Los Angeles. Along the way the DR650 proved to be a great bike for the trip particularly when it came to the dirt.

In LA John and Gerry went West to Sydney, I went East back to Dubai to support



Expat Man 'road tests' XR in the Dubai deserts before purchase

the coalition in Iraq!! (really to be with the family during this time and give my bum a break - the seat is not as good as BMW's) and returned to LA at the end of April after a 7 week holiday (not that the ride isn't). During the break I get a new recruit to distance riding, Graham Wadsworth an old mate from the UK, who said he would like to join me on the remaining trip to Alaska. In the seven weeks I was tasked with buying, preparing and shipping a bike at least cost to LA ready for collection when we arrived. The reason why is that Dubai is much cheaper than UK to purchase bikes and there I could test it before departure. All went well with the help of new friends Jay & Beverly in LA. Jay collected us on arrival, had the tools, fuel, transport and local knowledge to make everything work easily, Beverly provided first class accommodation and hospitality.

We departed LA and travelled North via the Rockies to Canada. Lots of problems with snow, as passes were blocked as we were early in the season, but arrived in Fairbanks in three weeks. We met one particular situation while Graham was making a phone call in a box when a Bear decided to sit next to the door so he could not get out, not that he wanted to while the bear was there, but all was well in the end.

On the return we visited and met up with a number of folks which made the trip: Dan & Cindy on Vancouver Island, Bob & Alison in Oregon and on the road we met up with, and spent a week riding with, Chris & Erin Ratay (www.ultimatejourney.com). We would like to say thanks to everyone we met, it was the sights and folks along the way that made the journey. Most of all we wish to thank the HorizonsUnlimited website as this gave us invaluable help and enabled us to meet some of the folks.

During the trip my Suzuki covered 46,000km with no problem (anyone who needs more information please email me) even using the same chain the whole trip, the XR400 of Graham's was fourth hand on purchase and after being thrashed around the deserts of Dubai for three years, again gave no problem in the 22,000km LA to Alaska and return.

We arrived back in LA exhausted but very happy and ready to do the whole trip again, after a rest for the bum!! We then took the flight back to the UK unfortunately arriving back a few days after the Horizons Unlimited Rally in Derbyshire UK. (next one at Ripley Derbyshire in July 2004) That will have to wait until I attend the one in Christchurch early next year. I am now waiting for the bike to arrive in the UK before the ride back to Dubai which should be a quick sprint, any volunteers to join me?

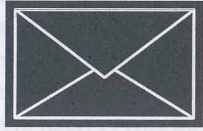
Best Regards Bob West"

In actual fact it was my 'Bruv', Micheal 'Sheikwaddiman' Wadsworth who took up the challenge on his BMW GS,.... so we were still keeping the task at hand 'in the family'.

The pair were last heard of riding the dirt through Iran and both bikes (and riders) still going strong!

Graham Wadsworth
East Midlands TRF

Ed Sounds absolutely fantastic Graham and those who complain of only hearing about overseas adventures can always write about their own equally exciting adventures in the UK.



letters


HISTORICAL (OR HYSTERICAL) EVENT OUR FIRST EVER AFTER DARK GREEN LANES RUN FEBRUARY 22ND 2004

Four of us and one "spectator", participated in this momentous record making Run, namely Roy Graham, myself, Ian "Gas Gas" & Bill Dauncey, the latter two, having mistaken the start time, did eventually manage to find us. The "spectator" was John Jenkins who had taken a nasty tarmac tumble from his bike on Friday 13th and could only just drive his car to the ends of some lanes, by dint of superb navigation.

Initially we were very cautious as we found ourselves on what nowadays is termed a "steep learning curve". The most disconcerting things were the shadows as we could not be certain if they were deep holes, rocks or fallen branches - until our respective front wheels found out - as did we! "Fast" going

was best covered on main beam & more difficult on dip. Brake lights did NOT cause dazzle, much to my surprise.

Ian found that direct lighting is not ideal, as, when he slowed to look at difficult bits the light dimmed, so he went even slower and the light became even dimmer, especially when he braked! Steve Tucker (Hedgehog Motorcycles) has since told me that there is a device to prevent this. I should imagine that is some form of capacitor. Roy Graham discovered that accidentally knocking one's light switch to 'off', whilst bouncing around, leads to a nice crash out on friendly stones! I don't have that problem as I have mounted the switch near the centre of the H'bars, just



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above the steering head.

We covered some 30 miles in the Parkham & Hartland (the easier ones) areas, in about 2 1/2 hours, with plenty of "yapping" time at the end of each lane. Despite frost and a bitter N.E. wind, we sweated. Our speed was not very much different from that of our day time runs. One big advantage was that on the tarmac lanes we had ample warning of other vehicles.

The going was fairly easy as about half the lanes were moderately dry - had they all been wet I think we would have had difficulty.

We all greatly enjoyed ourselves & voted for one such event every month to be known as "John's Moonlight Monthlies". I'll arrange a schedule once this cancer business is resolved. N.B. Torches essential.

John Chilcott

"The Oldest Swinger (Green Laner) in the West"

TRAIL/LARA/DEFRA DOCUMENT

The comment:- *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.*

Is not strictly true - following Dunblane only modern, metallic cartridge pistols were confiscated and the 57,000 owners compensated at the tax payers expense. Target shooting is still alive and well and is "good reason" for hold a firearm i.e. Section 1 Rifles and muzzle-loading revolvers can still be used in competition throughout the UK. Furthermore, via the NRA/HBSA/H.O. certain metallic cartridge pistols can be held and used non-competitively under the FAA 1997 Section 7 "Heritage" rules. And, yet another reason to visit the Isle of Man: modern, metallic cartridge pistols can still be owned and used there in competitive events.

Maybe the TRF/LARA/DEFRA can set up a similar set of rules so TRF Members can become : FOUR STROKES/WAX COTTONS ONLY Certificated Trail Riders - oh yes, and ride in groups of less than six too or go to Isle of Man?

As for crime: of course two strokes and MX attire would be banned with no compensation

David Clegg

Easton in Gordano Parish Councillor

P.s. I have written to my M.P. -for what good that will do - he's Dr Liam Fox?

ALL SHOULD VISIT AND VOTE FAST

Seen on T.V. 29th February - The BBC, in a so-called "Neutral" show, are allowing the Green Lane Alliance to paint a biased & bleak picture of

Bikes/4x4s in the Dales. But there is a 'Powerful' website you can leave comments on: www.bbc.co.uk/inside_out. I feel every biker/4x4 person should 'flood' this site with their views - maybe we can persuade an important body like the beeb to start thinking differently on the 'pro' public feelings on this.

Mark Giddings

RIDING IN WALES: ON-LINE PETITION

There's an on-line petition against EDM 380 (over 80 MPs have signed an Early Day Motion to have ALL Byways downgraded to Restricted Byway status) at www.saveourbyways.org.uk - all TRF members on-line must sign this.

A South Wales TRF member went to see his MP (the Hon. Rhodri Morgan) who is also the Head of the National Assembly for Wales. Mr Morgan couldn't understand why he knew nothing about this from his own Welsh DEFRA department(!), nor why Alun Michaels was the only signatory on the Consultation letter.

Mr Morgan is worried about the loss to the rural economy of Wales, if the legislation goes through, and he wants to hear from all trail riders who ride in Wales, with an estimate of how much they spend in terms of accommodation, fuel, food/booze, spares etc.

Can all TRF members who ride in Wales write to him at: Hon. Rhodri Morgan, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff, CF99 1NA.

Laurence John,

Thames Valley Secretary/Southern

ORGANISE AND TAKE ACTION

The February issue of TRAIL dropped on my mat as I was penning my protest letters to Alun Michael, Tony Blair et al, and the comments made by Phil Fawcett really struck a chord with me

The proposed legislation is not a must win issue for the government, like the Iraq war or Tuition fees - Its just another piece of ill-conceived meddling with no basis in the populous, produced at the behest of a vocal, organised minority. Our demise will join the long list of New Labour "Achievements" that only serve to disenfranchise, alienate and criminalise law abiding citizens, whilst those it is meant to curtail wheelie off in a plume of blue smoke (usually on an '88 RM250), laughing all the way to the next bridleway or piece of common - Metaphorically speaking of course!

IF WE ORGANISE AND TAKE ACTION, WE CAN DEFEAT THIS

The sight and sound of a 1000 bike invasion of Hyde Park as we fight to

Save Our Byways (SOB?) will have more impact than the rustle of 1000 rambblers, munching on their Kendal Mintcakes as they protest what exactly? - The right to wander on a few more miles of OUR roads without having to watch out for traffic.

Anyone can be a touch line player so I am determined to take positive action to defeat this proposal, so here goes - I propose the TRF board make Phil Fawcett the Affirmative Action Officer with their executive authority to take whatever steps are necessary to defeat this proposal and Regain The Lanes! Any seconders? (Or better job title/acronyms!)

Trevor Swales, Notts

DO YOU HAPPEN TO POSSESS A PARACHUTE, BETTER STILL, HAVE A HELICOPTER?

No? Shame, because that means one area of the newly opened public access land will remain out of bounds to you.

The Countryside Agency is now going through the final agonies of implementing the CROW (Countryside and Rights of Way) legislation across the West Country. Though, as you might expect from an exercise, which has been dogged by so much muddle and delay, the work is not all proceeding at the same pace everywhere.

It is, for example, rather more advanced in the 'Wessex' region than in the 'South West'. And if these strange regional names don't mean much to you, let me explain. They represent the sub regions within which nature conservation agencies mysteriously choose to work.

There is, however, one snag: the border between these two cuts across Somerset, so the new access land on one side of the line will be thrown open to every rambler in the country, while on the other they'll still be arguing the toss over the fine detail of

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the arrangements.

Not, in the eyes of many people, that it will ultimately make much difference. The Ramblers Association, the organisation that campaigned most vigorously for the new right to roam, is one of several pressure groups to punch above its weight. Somehow it has managed to convince ministers that out there somewhere is a huge army of walkers all working dubbin into their boots and hand washing their mohair socks ready for the signal to invade the newly-liberated five million acres of British countryside.

Don't you believe it. The Ramblers Association, while worthy and well intentioned, has about 127,000. Even if they were out on the same day, they would be spread pretty thinly over the land that is already available for access. Add in the extra five million acres and they'd be almost invisible. And it is unlikely that cohorts of new recruits to the cause will be getting off the sofa and turning off the TV to join them.

Which means that the government could have jumped through all sorts of fiery hoops and alienated landowners for nothing. And the parachute and helicopter? Ah, yes. You will need one or the other to get to one of the new access areas already created in Somerset. It lies in the middle of a farm. And there is absolutely no public right of way by which it can be reached.

The Countryman

Taken from a free monthly paper published in Minehead - West Somerset

MEDIA PORTRAYAL

Towards the end of January I switched on the Radio and, to my surprise, listened to all but, I assume, the first few seconds of a debate between a member of the TRF (sorry but I missed the name) who, very articulately, presented 'our' view to John Humphreys (who is the major presenter of the daily programme).

In finishing off the debate Mr Humphreys took the usual swipe at us by saying 'trail bikes or scramblers, call them what you will'. This after he had it clearly and patiently explained to him that trail bikes were **not** scramblers and that they were road legal vehicles etc.

Incensed, I wrote to the BBC to complain - if the government can, then so can a subject. I did receive a reply - but it is almost totally meaningless and avoids any mention of the points I raised.

However, that said, keep up the pressure on the media etc. every time they mislead and misrepresent us. We have much to lose in our current battle.

*Rob Stephens
Axe Vale Group*

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GROUPS

AXE VALE Malcolm Preece, Tel: 01275 844757
2nd Mon, 8pm, venue to be confirmed.

BLACK COUNTRY 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
3rd Thurs, 8pm, *Pencaron Club, Bodmin*

CUMBRIA Anthony Hayhurst, Tel: 01539 721115
2nd Tues, *Derby Arms Hotel, Witherlack, 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 Wheatheaf 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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1st Tues, 8.30pm, *Black Horse at Endon (A53, about 3 miles west of Leek, Staffordshire)*

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
2nd Thurs, *Inn in the Park, Woodley Centre, E. Reading*

NORTHUMBERLAND Chris Moody
Tel: 0191 387 3507 6-10pm or 07860 302001 (mobile)
1st Tues, 8pm, *North Durham Motorclub, Annfield Plain, Nr Stanley*

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*

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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*

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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*

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